

THE
FORCE OF NATURE;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
CHARLES LORD SOMMERS:
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

By the EDITOR of the WANDERER.

All NATURE's dictates carefully obey;

Erring from her you miss th' ETERNAL way.

If a good man would consult his own HEART, he would
generally find it the wisest of counsellors.

ANON.

L O N D O N :

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A N D

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MDCCLXVIII.

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THE
P R E F A C E.

WHEN the EDITOR prepared the following sheets for the press, he thought of nothing less than of acquiring any fame by them, or rising superior to criticism.—Only having examined them, and found they contained, in general, a good moral, and sentiments which, however *trite*, were nevertheless *just*, at the least; he thought it apology sufficient for presenting them, as they now stand, to the public.

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And, indeed, if writings of this kind could always be said to be *harmless* in their tendency, it would perhaps be well for the modern world: but some people delight in extraordinaries; and no wonder if such would rather receive any thing *extraordinarily bad*, than but, *indifferently good*: such is the taste of too many in this age.

To such, however, these Letters are neither addressed, nor recommended: but the Editor will think himself sufficiently justified in his opinion, if any, who by laudable pursuits render their *studies useful*, should acknowledge, while they read these volumes, their *amusement* to be *innocent*.

THE
FORCE of NATURE;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
CHARLES Lord SOMMERS.

LETTER I.

Mr. RAMBLE to Captain SEYMOUR.

Dear TOM,

May 19.

THOU art, positively, a strange fellow.—What wouldst thou be at? Is it thy *honour*, and thy *gratitude*? What a plague have *virtue*

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and

and *prudence* to do in the matter, when a fine girl is in the question? In the name of common sense, why did not thy parents put thee on a black gown, instead of a scarlet coat? I am sure it would much better have become thee; for thou couldst have preached as rigid doctrines, and lived as free a life as any of them.

Thinkest thou, oh most tremendous son of Mars, that thou walkest in the clouds of obscurity? I tell thee, No — thou art open to me; and, but for the fear of thy puissant *arm*, and of thy still more puissant *pen*, thou mightest perhaps long ere this have been open to something I could name.—Tell me not of friendship

ship with a charming female. Away with thy Platonic Love! I will have none of it: my soul disdains such paltry artifice. I bring to thy view Nature, simple Nature, such as she really is, not such as the extravagant pencil of romance would paint her.— But the example of thy new guest has set thy pride to work at an imitation of what thou ownest, at the same time, thou never wilt be able to equal: thou never canst so well dissemble (for dissimulation certainly it is). But I know, if I go on at this rate, thou wilt forget one of the duties of thy religion, and never forgive me [for what?] for telling thee the truth.

But you ask me seriously what I intend with Cecilia ? Seriously, then, I answer thus. Her father put her into my hands with all the gravity of a *citizen* ; I received her with all the gaiety of a *courtier* : I have taken her from trade, stocks, formality and Cheapside, to life, pleasure, love and Belmont. I have conceived a passion for her person, and I believe the dear little Brunette has a *tendre* for a certain gentleman of your acquaintance ; not that he has vanity enough to suppose every woman he sees in love with him—But her eyes, Tom, her tell-tale eyes, have betrayed the whole secret.

Were I ever disposed to sacrifice my liberty, I really think it would be at her shrine ; but no more of that,

The History of Lord Sommers. 5

that, I shudder at the thought. So, in short (Cupid willing) I design (don't frown so friend) to retain her as a friend, companion, mistress, or what other name you chuse to put upon her, as long—as we like each other,—and no harm done.

So prythee, truce with thy gravity; and, if thou dost not intend me to die with curicfity (a disease very fatal in our family) let me know, presently, some particulars of this star which has lately appeared so brilliant in your sphere. Pray Heaven she prove not a comet, portending mischief to thee! Mean while, make my devoirs to all friends, male and female, who are any way connected with thyself, or

P. S. Neglect not to remember me
to the black-ey'd girl in the
corner.



LETTER II.

Capt. SEYMOUR to J. RAMBLE, Esq;

Dear JACK, May 30.

WILT thou never leave off thy
evil courses, and *hair breadth*
'scapes? never be serious on any sub-
ject? What an unaccountable epistle
hast thou sent me! *Multum in parvo*
will never be thy motto, I am sure.
I asked thee but one plain question,
and thou hast answered me by fifty
others, nothing to the purpose, but
left me just where I was before. If
I had taken the *gown* instead of the
sword,

sword, truly I think I should have found subject enough for the pulpit, for at least the first twelve months, in declaiming against thy irregularities — but let us leave this subject; as thou knowest *ludere cum sacris* was never among my follies; and I am still, as I said before, in the dark with regard to Cecilia; but sure you do not, I trust you do not, mean to ruin her fame and peace; — you cannot be so base.—Her father entrusted her to you, committed her to your care; she put herself into your protection; consider that. Can you betray her, and violate the double trust of your guardian, and of your friend? If you call this *preaching*, I must *preach* in-

deed; but for the person you mention, most certainly one single sentence of his would have more effect on a volatile disposition, like yours, than a whole volume from me. I wish you had heard him discourse in a conversation we had yesterday, on the duties of a married state, and the nature of chastity in men. All the women in company were charmed with him, particularly his Charlotte, that *star*, which, as you elegantly phrase it, has of late adorned our hemisphere. And, by my soul, Ramble, the greatest libertine could not have refused him a plaudit he so justly deserved. After a life spent in the military, after a series of riot and excess,

cess, this excellent young man has made a complete convert of me to the cause of virtue.

And as religion and morality are never conveyed with a stronger impulse to the heart, than from the mouths of the fair; so Miss Charlotte has contributed, in the highest manner, to strengthen, in my breast, these new-acquired principles, for such I blush to own they are; but come hither yourself, and be a witness of the truth of what I say.

It was not without uneasiness that I read the postscript of your letter. How can you treat, with such levity, affairs of so serious a nature? — Poor Betsey is in a sad situation, indeed.

10 The Force of Nature ; or,

Discarded from her friends and acquaintance, she spends the days in grief, and the nights in complainings. It is true, indeed, you have taken care she shall not want for money ; but what a poor recompence is that for the sacrifice she has made to you ; for fame and virtue lost ! Adieu. Be merciful, or rather be *just* !—I could say more on this subject, but forbear, till you meet at

Your friend's,

T. SEYMOUR.

L E T.

L E T T E R III.

MISS CHARLOTTE CARLETON, to
MISS ARABELLA HALE.

My dear Arabella, May 18.

IT is an age since I have heard from you. Have you quite forgot your Charlotte? I assure you, my dear, I have occasion enough for the correspondence and consolation of a friend. It is true, Sir George, and his amiable sister, watch over me with an almost parental tenderness; but remember the loss I have sustained of him who gave me being, and the added one of quitting my native place, as I so lately did, for a city of hurry and confusion; for such, at best, London appeared to me. I
looked

looked back (and do still, indeed) with a secret satisfaction on the rural scenes, the seats of sweet content and peace, where once I spent my happier earlier days of infancy, blessed in the presence of my parent and my friend. Oh Arabel! what a change! but I will not murmur at the decrees of Providence, who is often pleased to lead us through the thorny paths of affliction to unexpected felicity.— I am now returned, tho' not to my native place, to a sweet rural retreat, and the protection of a real friend. Sir George is a man of great good-nature, and a sound understanding, but rather too much addicted to hasty flights of passion: his sister is of an affable, yet lively disposition; and
tho'

tho' her person is far from what is generally termed beautiful, yet the smiles of good-nature, which spreads itself over her cheek, and the sweetness of her deportment, are such as engage the particular attention of most of those who know her.

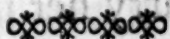
There is a gentleman lately arrived here, a distant relation of Sir George, who (if he be indeed what he seems) is, certainly, the most extraordinary of men. There is something, however, extremely mysterious in his affairs, as I have perceived by some hints lately dropped by the family. Would you believe it, Arabel? the man has assurance enough to railly us women severely on our foibles, and talks of truth and sincerity,

cerity, and many other antiquated virtues in a circle of court ladies, like an inhabitant of the antediluvian world. He is not ashamed to profess *religion*, and esteem it beyond *interest*, *simplicity* beyond *eclat*, and *honour* beyond *fashion*. In short, if he goes on thus, he will bid fair for exhibiting, in his proper person, ‘*the faultless monster which the world ne’er saw.*’

Seriously, my dear, there is something in this man that engages the attention of every one. Need I hesitate to confess that it has engaged mine, among the rest?—Methinks I see you smile; but you are a naughty girl, and it is no such matter.

Lord

Lord bless me! what a confusion is here!—One, two, three, four, five, six, and the unaccountable man in the midst of them. What can this mean? I must lay down my pen.—Adieu, for the present; I will tell you more presently.



SO all is out: What a strange piece of work has here been! Would you think it, Arabella? they have detected him in the fact.—This virtuous, religious, chaste, sober man, was this very hour convicted of—what he would have given the world to conceal.

To keep you no longer in suspense; Mr. Gower (for so they call this extraordinary creature) hearing
of

16 The Force of Nature; or,
of a poor girl, in the neighbourhood,
being seduced by a young fellow, un-
der pretence of honourable courtship,
enquired into the affair. Finding her
not abandoned, and it being inti-
mated that her seducer, who was the
son of a tradesman, might be pre-
vailed on to marry her if a portion of
about forty pounds could be pro-
cured, Mr. Gower this evening, in
presence of her parents, advanced
that sum;—and Sir George met him
coming out of the house, or rather
cottage, the old folks and their
daughter overwhelming him with
their blessings, and expressions of
gratitude.

To-morrow their hands are to be
joined.—The young woman and
her

her friends have spread the news, notwithstanding his strict injunctions to the contrary. — And hither are they all come, surrounding the poor man, and dragging him before me and Miss Harriet, as to the place of execution. — Really I pity him, and so would you if you could but see how simple he looks.

Harriet. “ Mr Gower, this is the noblest action ! ”

Sir George. “ The most refined piece of charity ! ”

Charlotte. “ Give me leave, Sir, to express at once my praise and admiration.”

Mr. Gower. “ Sir George ! — Madam ! — Ladies ! For heaven’s sake — I am but *one* man.”

Har-

Harriet. “ And a *noble one*, indeed—Why, Sir, all the sex might rise up in arms for you—Miss Charlotte” (the dear girl loves mischief, like my Arabel) “ give me leave to present to you Mr. Gower, as one of the noblest, and most disinterested of men”. — — —

I blushed, and frowned, while with an unaffected ease the confident creature (oh ! the supreme assurance of these modest men) taking my hand, before I was aware, pressed it to his lips, and, with a smile full of benignity bowing over it, said, —Miss Carleton, I am sure, will never need examples of virtue, while they are so recent in her own behaviour—I am but a copyist of the bright original

ginal — and the charity she practised at S*** Place may well keep me in countenance; and then the man began to run on with I know not what of an old story of a trifling assistance I had once given to a family in distress; thus covering his own confusion at the expence of mine: I now grew downright angry, the company joining in the retort; but the lively Harriet, having made some reflexions on my embarrassment, which heightened it not a little, just at the instant I expected his triumph, he respectfully withdrew.— Mercy on us, what a creature!

How should he know this circumstance, I have related? — Indeed, my dear, he is very mysterious.— The thought

20 The Force of Nature ; or,
thought of him inspires an awe
which the pleasure of his presence
alone can palliate. He is not loud in
laughter ; yet is still less frequently
seen to contract his brow into a
frown ; but when he does, his frown
would awe the most daring. — His
eye is keen and penetrating, his coun-
tenance manly, and blooming ; his
whole person — But whither am I
going ? ——— Oh ! Arabel ! “ Why
that sigh, my dear ? ” — I’ll tell you it
is — it is — I think it is, because I
cannot come up to his perfections.
“ A fine reason, truly ! ” — Be quiet,
my dear, naughty girl, and don’t pre-
tend to know more of me, than I do
of myself — No — Miss Hale, never
shall specious appearances win on
your

your Charlotte — We are summoned to dinner. Adieu ! believe me

Your ever faithful

CHARLOTTE.



LETTER IV.

Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON,

In continuation.

May 25.

WHO do you think, my dear, is just returned to us from Mr. Saunders's? Of all the birds in the air, captain Seymour, of whom you have heard me make frequent mention, as a sort of convert of Mr. Gower. He is a man of good sense, and has a great deal of the *deportment*

ment militaire, so much admired by our sex; but he has not the winning, the engaging softness of Mr. Gower. "Still harping on him?" Yes, you dear, tormenting creature, I will again and again proclaim his virtues, and glory that they are not able to make a conquest of me. Besides captain Seymour, we have this day been favoured with the company of one Dr. Bertie, a worthy divine, of his acquaintance, whose presence, however, was far from restraining the innocent sallies of our mirth;—we were all harmony. After dinner, a walk was proposed in the park. Mr. Gower led me: he was tenderly complaisant, yet by no means particular; but the case was different between

tween Miss Harriet and the captain: that gentleman was perpetually plying her with his gallantries, which she was ever avoiding and returning, by the lively strokes of her wit, and the quick turns of her imagination; so that, indeed, I think it was a draw-battle, at last. —

I have just received a letter from my uncle and guardian, of which I send you a copy inclosed.



LETTER V.

Sir JOHN GRETTON to Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON.

My dear niece, May 21.

IT is with the greatest pleasure that I hear you are so agreeably situated in Sir George's family: yet, pardon my

my abruptness, child, there is, I think, one thing wanting to your happiness; I would not be thought either to offend your delicacy, or to influence your choice. But there is a young, noble, wealthy, and, I believe, worthy gentleman, who has written to me for leave to address you—I have referred him to you, but shall not mention his name till you have seen his person, which will be within these few days.—I could, indeed, say much on this subject, but trust to your discretion, and am well assured, that you will nicely weigh a matter of such importance to your own happiness, before you determine—In the mean while, I am
proud

proud to subscribe myself, dear
niece,

Your affectionate kinsman,

J. GRETTON.

Now what think you of this, my
Arabella? Who should the person
be, to whom Sir John is so suddenly
inclined to dispose of me? My uncle
has indeed ever acted to me the part
of a guardian, and a friend; and I
have the greatest hopes he will not
now deviate from the plan of justice
he has laid down, nor the affection
he has professed to me; yet I cannot
help trembling while I think of this
extraordinary circumstance. Believe
me, my dear, I think matrimony is,

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indeed,

indeed, a weighty concern; nor am I, by any means, in haste to enter into that holy state. Nothing is, indeed, more surprising to me, than to see the crowd of young people, who are daily rushing into the bands of wedlock, without seeming to have the least knowledge of its nature, or being capable of discharging its duties: the affectionate wife, the tender mother, are characters they seem to have no notion of. From such circumstances, surely, it must arise, that we see so many unhappy matches, not only where force and the commands of imperious governors join the hands of the unwilling, but even where the lovers are matched by consent:

consent : for what is a blessing, without the means of using it ? what is love, without prudence ?

Sir George is below, enquiring for me ; so I must quit, for a while, the pleasing task of addressing my Arabel, and subscribe myself

her affectionate friend,

CHARLOTTE CARLETON.



L E T T E R VI.

Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON,

In continuation.

May 28.

MERCY on us, my dear, a new visiter ! and one the most unexpected in the world—Mr. Ramble,

28 The Force of Nature; or,
the friend of captain Seymour: he
seems to be a lively young fellow,
but, I fear, deeply tainted with the
fashionable vices. You will not won-
der that he is so, when I tell you he
is a pupil of the earl of M****, the
most debauched of men. — How
strange it is, Arabella, that sex should
take so much pains to destroy that
virtue, which they own to be the
most shining one in womankind, and
which, when a female has once lost,
they utterly despise her—Cruel at-
tempt! — Barbarous inhumanity!

I assure you, the man has a great
share of effrontery: he seems to
make very free with every one, par-
ticularly with the lively Harriet; but
she rattles him in such a manner,
that

that the confident thing is sometimes put to a stand. For *my own* part, there are many reasons why *I* should converse with him as little as possible.

Sir George, however, seems well enough pleased in his company, declares he is a good-natured fellow, and a merry bottle-companion. I cannot, indeed, judge at all of the *latter* part of his character; but as to the *former*, the term is become so vague and indeterminate in our language, that it is scarce possible to affix any certain idea to it. Men who are guilty of every excess, to the injury of their own constitution, and the hurt of their neighbours, are said to be *good-natured*. Those who are perpetually acting contrary to the

30 The Force of Nature ; or,

rules of prudence, and even of common sense, and rendering themselves the ridicule of the wise and good, are, likewise, complimented with this title. How absurd to bestow on such wretches an epithet which belongs, of right, only to the just and virtuous ! Strange that —— Interrupted again. Sir George and captain Seymour's compliments. — Mischief on the men ! what would they have ? Well, I come.—I will just step down, and see the creatures,—(as lady Rattlesays) and then return to my task.—Adieu, Bell, I shall be with you again, presently.

WELL ! I am got away, at last.—
Every day confirms us in our good
opinion

opinion of Mr. Gower : We have had a conversation which has done him honour, and his whole sex. Captain Seymour seconded him, yet looked like one in doubt, and seemed to watch his eyes for direction.—

My dear Arabel ! how beautiful is Virtue ! Methought our guest looked like an angel, while he pleaded her cause.

The point in question related to the seducing of young women, and the ill consequences attending such a practice.—Mr. Ramble made very light of it, and even Sir George did not, in my mind, seem to treat it seriously enough. This subject, sure, was artfully introduced by captain

Seymour; and when Mr. Gower came to speak of it, how delicately did he handle it! with what energy did he strip off from Vice the tinsel of fashion, and display her in her own native form! Yet had you heard with what tenderness he spoke of the unhappy deluded victims of a lawless passion, you would have thought it was the angel of mercy pleading for the children of disobedience. The argument was as well supported, on the other side, as falsity would admit: for, to do Mr. Ramble justice, he seems to have a tolerable share of sense; which is, in fact, no more than saying he abuses the good talents which heaven has blessed him with. In the end, Mr. Gower was
victor,

victor, and he bore his triumph so well, that he highly deserved it, had it even been on a more indifferent subject. I received his compliments, too, on the share I bore in the discourse, till he saw me confused ; and then he retired.

Sir John Gretton is expected in town daily. Heaven ! what will my fate do with me !—Mr. Gower, I fear, has spoiled me for a wife — (you need not smile, my Arabel) I mean by the picture he is daily presenting us of what a man *ought to be*, and which, I fear, I never shall find one that *is*, except himself — and he —

But when, My friend, shall we see you here ? I long for your company ; and were it not for the con-

solation I find in writing to you, in spite of the agreeable face this family wears, I should be, indeed, unhappy.

But, alas, my Arabella! who yet knows where our lot shall be cast? Perhaps it is decreed, we shall be separated yet farther; perhaps our friendship is a felicity too pure for us to enjoy without alloy.—I have, indeed, contracted such a method of thinking, that when I reflect on the vicissitudes of human affairs, the frailty of all mortal enjoyments, I never taste a pleasure like that I experience in the conversation or correspondence of my friends, but I fear it should be wrested from me! Forgive my weakness: perhaps in
this

this I err; perhaps I ought to trust with a more chearful heart in Providence; but the fatal blow I experienced, in the loss of my parents, has inspired these gloomy thoughts. However, heaven has raised up to me friends, protectors, guardians; and I ought to be contented.

One thing, at present, much disturbs me, and that is, a second journey to London, which is far from having any charms for one of my disposition; and is, at best, as I have said before, but a scene of noise and folly. Oh! my friend, could we—but Providence seems otherwise to have determined us—could we but live happy together in some retirement,

ment, I should ask no more. But I must break off here—Farewel. May heaven pour on my Arabella every blessing that is sincerely wished to her by her.

CHARLOTTE.



LETTER VII.

The Earl of M*****

To J. RAMBLE, Esq;

Dear JACK, June 4.

I AM greatly surpris'd at thy silence. What, in the name of wonder, hast thou done with thyself these two long weeks? Seymour, it seems, has heard from thee since. How can a fellow of thy spirit and gaiety listen to the musty rules of that new convert from our good old cause,

cause, which thou hast so often, and so emphatically stiled the cause of dame Nature herself! Are all my lectures, all my *pious cares*, thrown away upon thee, thou apostate? Well, be it so; but know, if thou art such, a time will come when Nature shall resume her right, and powerfully plead her own cause in thy retrograde bosom.

But perhaps I know not whom I am all this time addressing myself to: it may be the whole of this epistle may be shewn to Seymour's idol, the hypocritical Gower; if it be so,—farewel, a long farewel to all our friendship.

Joking apart, I assure thee, Jack, I would wish thee to be more on thy guard

guard against the *zealous* captain, and the *designing* stranger, for such I find Gower is to the Arnold family.—Believe me, all this piety is affected, and he has the worst heart in the world.

It is now five years since first I saw this extraordinary phænomenon: he was, at that time, a stripling, and was introduced to my acquaintance by the lady Isabella Vere, who then entertained, and I believe still does entertain, a violent passion for his person, if, indeed, her desires be not yet fated by possession.

The youth was, at that time, an orphan destitute of relations, and, for his pride and ill behaviour, forsaken by

by his friends. To oblige lady Isabella, I took him under my protection: before this period, tho' scarce seventeen, he had debauched a young girl, the daughter of a reputable tradesman, who was won, by his promises, to believe he would marry her: to this he was urged by her friends; but I (acting on our old principle, Jack, and pitying the case of Isabel) warded off the blow for him; and now, dost thou think, this man of honour requited me?

It happened, I, in my turn, had a favour to request of him; which related to the securing to me an estate, my undoubted right, and which he refused, with all the pride of formal virtue, merely because it could not
be

40 The Force of Nature ; or,

be justified by forms that were made to bind fools with. Neither did this satisfy him ; but he made so free with my character, that I was obliged to forbid him my house ; and, but for the respect I bore Isabel, in all probability worse consequences might have ensued.

Lady Isabella (if not dishonoured) is, at least, forsaken, despised, nay, vilified, and left to sigh alone : the very woman, who extended her helping hand to save him, when destitute of the very necessaries of life, he wandered, a mere vagrant, from place to place. The present lord Sommers is, I believe, his uncle : how greatly, then, must he have *offended* him !
since

since that nobleman perpetually denies to own him for a relation.

Thus have I given thee a short history of this *pious stranger*, who, thou seest, is no *stranger* to me: but, for many reasons, keep thy knowledge of him, as yet, a secret: I only tell thee, that thou mayest not be deluded by him, as, it seems, our best friend the captain has been; and, depend upon it, where-ever so much pretence to piety exists, there is always hypocrisy at the bottom.

But what information hast thou been able to obtain, concerning Miss Charlotte Carleton? I am more interested in the affair than thou, at present, canst imagine.—I have heard
she

she is indeed a beauty, but chaste as camphire, and cold as virgin snow. This Gower must never think to carry her off. By heaven I wonder at the impudent affectation of the man; and yet there are many in the world who will suffer themselves to be persuaded out of their senses by such hypocrites.

Oh! Ramble! little dost thou think what I suffer in this boorish place, and how I long for the metropolis.

My company here consists of my mother, an antiquated maiden sister, and a few cats, whom the latter keeps to amuse her in her hours of solitude.—I am as little among them as possible; but for an hour or two
after

after dinner I am generally favoured with their conversation. If I attempt to rise,—“What! going so soon, my dear?” says the old lady.—“Retiring to my study, madam.” “Brother, do you forget that the doctor told you it was unwholesome?—My Lord **** says [I shall never forget him] avoid it by all means:” and then am I tormented by the repetition of a story I have heard, perhaps, a hundred times. Next follows a dissertation on the nature and end of reading, by the good dowager, which is generally followed by a discourse on the fashions fifty years ago, by my facetious lady sister. I yawn, I stretch, I shift places, but in vain; for I cannot, without an absolute breach

breach of manners and civility (which is by no means admissible) escape the persecution till my mother and sister rise at their usual hour, regularly as if they went by clock-work, to do the honours of the tea-table, at which I seldom attend, except when the two Miss Holwells are there.

A-pro-pos, one of these girls is a perfect beauty; and, I believe, so circumstanced, that she might be made an easy conquest; and, indeed, she will do most exquisitely well to toy an hour with—But of this hereafter. For heaven's sake, my dear friend, send me all the news thou canst from the rational world; for I am here in a most deplorable condition: not a
female

female creature in the house but is either old, or ugly (dear sister, I beg pardon) and so tormented with prudishness, and formality, that I am devoured with the spleen, as Miss Holwell says. But I am interrupted, and can say no more, Adieu, dear Jack. Send me a circumstantial answer to this, and, together with it, all the news thou canst get, in compassion to the miserable situation of

thy friend in the old faith,

M****.

L E T T E R

L E T T E R VIII.

J. RAMBLE, Esq; to the Earl of
M****.

My dear Lord,

I AM quite angry with you for your suspicions of your friend; yet I thank you for your antidote against the hypocrisiy of Seymour, and the formal Gower. I must own, I began to entertain a most extraordinary opinion of that stranger, but his history has cured me of it;—in short, there are, I perceive, none of those *sober fellows* who are a whit better than we *honest libertines*: the captain, however, is a mad bigot, as you will see, by the inclosed epistle of his, which I send you.

All

All I can learn of Charlotte (as yet) is, that she is a young lady of great fortune and expectations, and is just come out of the country almost as much an orphan as Gower himself, and put under the guardianship of Sir George Arnold, with whose sister Harriet she has contracted a strict friendship.

I am heartily sorry for your situation, but have little of news to send you, except that lady Isabella Vere, whom you mentioned in your last, is just arrived in town, and that I myself am preparing for a journey to **** Place, on Sir George Arnold's invitation, where I hope to spend my time more agreeably than you do with your mother and lady-sister,
and

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and whence I may, possibly, send you
more interesting intelligence. Adieu.
Believe me to be, my lord,

Your ever sincere friend,
and servant,

J. RAMBLE.



L E T T E R I X .

From the same to the same.

Dated at **** Place, June 6.

My Lord,

I ARRIVED here about a week
since, and am really highly pleased
with my situation. Gower, how
great a hypocrite soever he may be,
is certainly, on the whole, a pleasing
companion ; and as to the women,
they

they are all mad for him. Sir George is good-natured and agreeable, his sister lively and entertaining; but as for Miss Charlotte—how shall I describe her person and qualifications! Have you seen the Venus of Medicis? By my soul, my lord, she is not to compare, in mien, beauty, and shape, with this earth-born goddess.

She is exquisitely well formed, of a stature rather above the middle size, fair of complexion, yet the roses of health bloom in her countenance; her fine silky hair shines like amber, and falls, of itself, in such natural ringlets, as no art can parallel: her eye-brows, which are dark, finely shade a pair of eyes of

a glossy blue. Her heaving bosom, of a snowy whiteness, is the very seat of love.—Are you not enchanted, my Lord, with this description? What, then, would you be with the original! Many of your romantic knights would add a thousand flourishes on the *beauties of her mind*; but, for my part, in spite of all her endeavours to conceal it, I think she is a mere prude.

Miss Harriet would be esteemed a beauty, if she were not seen with this lady; but now she is totally eclipsed; yet I think her lively manner by far more agreeable than the serious deportment her friend affects. I heartily wish we could get you
down

down here; but from what you have said, I apprehend you would not see Mr. Gower, or seem to know him: I assure you, he pretends to be very mysterious, and is perpetually gaining on peoples esteem: it is well you forewarned me against his art; or even I might have listened to him with *pleasure*, as I do now only with *admiration*.

Well, I certainly am a strange fellow, to run on thus with my eyes open, in my evil courses, as Mr. Gower calls them; and then the captain with his serious face;—I have held a little kind of argument with them, but faith, my lord, they silenced me: it was about gallantry; how the women triumphed, especially

that dear, lovely, prudish, little creature.—Yet, upon my soul, she is a miracle. Oh! she would be a banquet for a prince, and such a one as, next to myself, I should be glad to see *you*, or our friend Leland, preparing for. To see the lovely, obstinate, angry, glowing fair one, struggling in your arms!—Am not I a wicked fellow for the thought? But such, I doubt, I shall ever remain, while I am,

ever yours,

J. RAMBLE.

L E T-

L E T T E R X.

From Mr. GOWER to J. SELWYN, Esq;
in Paris.

May 5.

MY dear friend, my only comfort in affliction, what scenes have I known since I left you! what trying circumstances have I been in! Mrs. Arden, Lady Isabella—by those names you may guess my sorrows. Alas! that one imprudence, in early youth, should involve me in such difficulties! But this is as a lesson to me to avoid every occasion of falling. Regret for what is past, would, indeed, if viewed in any other light, be not only *useless*, but even *hurtful*: but for this woman, what can she mean? Have I not done every thing

in my power to atone for the injury she sustained? Did I not put it in her power to match herself according to her own inclinations? She is now a widow; what more would she have with me? But she is restless, and troublesome, and *I* cannot be cruel.— Yet it is necessary to suppress, in some measure, the weakness of nature, and to be guarded against designing people; for of that number, I fear, she is.

As for lady Isabella, I bedew, while I write of her, the paper with my tears.—Ah what unhappy destiny first inspired that sad, that hopeless passion for me in her breast? for oh! as sure as I am unhappy, we never, never, can meet. One grand bar is, my love for Charlotte: but, farther,
I must

I must tell you, I am not superstitious; yet, tho' I esteem her as a *friend*, whenever I but indulge a thought of her in a *nearer* and *dearer* connexion, my blood runs cold, and my heart is thrilled with horror. What can this mean? Sure, heaven itself forbids such an union!—yet so fair, so accomplished, so gentle, and so generous; she is, sure, deserving of every wish her pure heart can form.—There is I know not what of an unfortunate fatality that pursues me—Lord M****, I am informed, is as much my enemy as ever.—What an abandoned man is that! and what have I done to merit his resentment? What but preventing him from committing a crime, the nature of which,

D 4

which, to any one but yourself, I never have divulged ; yet he it is that spirits up this Mrs. Arden to persecute me ; he it is that magnifies my cruelty to the unhappy Isabella. But I am going to retreat from this great city, and leave at once, if possible, these occasions of my infelicity.

Yet shall I go, all things considered, with a wounded heart.—The last words of my unhappy patroness are still graven on my memory.—

“ Ah, Mr. Gower, you leave me, I see, because I am destructive of your peace. —Go, then, said she, pressing my hand to her breast, go where your peace, and the dictates of your
heart,

heart, call you : go ; but remember, if ever you think on your Isabella, you think on one who prizes you even beyond her fame.—Perhaps this is the last trouble you ever may have from me.—Accept, at least, this little remembrance of me, and wear it next your heart.” So saying, she took a miniature picture of herself from her bosom, whose whiteness her trickling tears bedewed, while she spoke. I was moved : I turned aside, myself, and wiped my eyes.”—“ And is it possible ! she cried, are you affected, too ? ” I pressed her hand ; and, while she inclined towards me, I spoke words of comfort to the mourner, and joined my lips

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to her's at parting. She heaved a deep sigh, and followed me, till out of sight, with her eyes.—

How deplorable a circumstance is this, my friend!—What a noble mind has passion unhinged! how generous a heart am I the cause of torment to! Oh! Selwyn, would to heaven I had never known Isabella, or that I never had beheld Charlotte! For sure, if ever love was hopeless, mine for her is so. Weak as I was, I suffered love too suddenly to take possession of my breast: I gazed, and was undone. The circumstances, I believe, I never told you. They were these.

When

When I was the last summer with Mr. Ashby, whom you know, on a visit to Mr. Saunders in ———shire, it happened, that Sir John Gretton, and this lady, were also invited. Tho' I stayed but three days there, with my friend Ashby, Mr. Saunders, being his acquaintance, not mine, I was so struck with this amiable creature (to whom I desired, and still desire, to remain a stranger) that her image is ever present in my mind. Her affable, her courteous behaviour; her good sense, and refined sentiments, made then such an impression on my heart, as no time can ever erase. When I left Mr. Saunders, I could not help making particular enquiries after her: I soon found she
was

was the daughter of a person of great fortune and merit in —shire ; and that Sir John Gretton, with whom my uncle, the lord Sommers, was once intimately acquainted, was her kinsman.

From that moment I had, indeed, reason to despair, on every account, considering my own dependent and obscure situation ; and, to complete my misfortunes, I had but just arrived in town before lady Isabella declared her unhappy passion for me ; and much about the same time I received letters from Mrs. Arden, whose treaty of marriage with her late husband was then on foot, under
my

my auspices. Ever uneasy, she still loaded me with reproaches, which the earl of M**** would have wished me to resent by abandoning her to her evil fortunes ; but I could not think of such a cruelty.—Soon afterwards the same nobleman made his wicked proposals to me, which, you know, were intended to ruin her nearest relation, and best friend. I rejected them with horror, and, by that means, made him my enemy for ever. My journey to Paris has, as far as I can find, no otherwise altered the face of affairs here, than in rendering it more easy for me to remain a stranger to some whose connexions I do not approve. But Isabella, and my tormentor Arden, as I before observed,

served,

served, the one actuated by love, the other by a diabolical malice, have found me out. With regard to the former, I have but one happiness, that is, that the hundred and fifty pounds a year your good relation left me, have taken me off from depending on her boundless generosity ; and for the other, the innocence of my heart, which alone must be my judge, my present good intentions, and my hearty repentance of the crime into which she herself, in early youth, deluded me, are my only consolations

But where do you think I am going to spend my tedious hours ? (such, I assure you, they will prove) It is to a cousin of captain Seymour's :
that

that gentleman is a man of great sense; and it is with pleasure I add, he is, of late, become a convert to virtue.

I will only add my best wishes to my dear friend, and every friend of his, with which I shall conclude this letter; and with the assurances of the eternal regard of,

his affectionate,

GOWER.

LET.

LETTER XI.

From the same to the same.

**** Place, May 16.

A GAIN, my friend, I console myself by writing to you. I arrived here about nine days since; but, good Heaven! what has been my surprise to find myself, at once, in the company of Sir George, his sister, and, wou'd you think it? my amiable Charlotte! Yet am I here a stranger; and the captain has engaged that I shall, as long as I please, remain so. This little deception of his was intended to give me pleasure, as he has heard me often speak with great regard of Miss Charlotte Carleton, whose father being dead since I last saw

saw her, Sir John Gretton, and this Sir George, are appointed her guardians.

Every day fans the hopeless fire in my breast, and all my pleasure is turned to pain. I sigh, I look melancholy, or gaze, with a fixed attention, on the object of my desires; while she, the arbitress of my fate, secure in conscious innocence, and a mind undisturbed by passion, seems to enjoy the state of angels, where every wish is complete, every desire satisfied.

The captain is gone, for a few days, to Mr. Saunders's, on some urgent business; and his departure has added to my melancholy. The whole

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whole family has noticed it; Sir
George even railles me on the sub-
ject, at the same time he seems to
wish his sister were the occasion
of it.

Indeed Harriet is a good girl, and
is possessed of such a fund of in-
nocent gaiety, as makes it hardly
possible to be melancholy in her com-
pany. I must be on my guard, my
friend; for never must the secret of
my passion escape my lips, (at least
thus circumstanced) how visible soever
it may be in my countenance: ho-
nour, honesty, and conscious shame,
forbid it. I know my unworthiness;
I pretend not to perfection; but this
I will always pretend to, never wil-
fully

fully to commit a bad or a mean action, to the offence of heaven, or injury of my fellow-creatures.

I could never answer it to my conscience, persecuted as I am by Mrs. Arden, unhappily beloved by Isabella, were I to make known to Miss Carleton a passion I must never hope to indulge, and endeavour to excite in her tender bosom one I must never hope to gratify.

Believe me, my dear Selwyn, it is, in my opinion, an offence next to that of deluding an innocent, to endeavour at fixing to one's self the affections of a lovely and virtuous object, which we cannot return, only for the sake of pleasing a blameable caprice,

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caprice, or gratifying a ridiculous vanity, which, in this case, becomes criminal; yet how few consider it in this *light*! For my own part, you know I am not covetous of praise, nor desire to be thought more righteous than my neighbours; but what reason and my own heart dictate, that I follow, to the best of my abilities, and pity those who do not. I am here agreeably interrupted by the company of my Charlotte, and the lively Harriet. — Adieu, for a while.

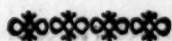


May 25.

MORE wonders: captain Seymour is returned already! and tells me, in confidence, he expects Ramble

ble here very soon. I pity that young fellow: I am afraid he has launched out too far into the fashionable vices of the age to reclaim, till age or misfortune involuntarily return him to a sense of his duty.

Here has been a letter received from Miss Carleton's guardian, Sir John, which seems to have put the whole family in a hurry: even Harriet looks grave upon it; and Sir George talks of riding farther into the country, upon some business of importance.



June 10.

This day I received the following lines from the good Dr. Bertie, who has had the care of lady Isabella from
her

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her youth, and whom I venerate as
the most respectable of characters.

“ July 18.

“ To Mr. GOWER.

“ S I R,

“ With a heart overflowing with
“ sorrow, I write to inform you of
“ the unhappy state of my dear lady’s
“ mind; and give you fresh instances
“ of a passion, of whose violence
“ you may judge, when you see it
“ break forth so extravagantly in a
“ woman of her uncommon deli-
“ cacy, and nobleness of spirit. No-
“ thing less, sure, than sympathy of
“ soul, and the power of nature her-
“ self working on her tender heart,
“ could

“ could occasion these overflowings.
“ She is in a distracted state of mind,
“ and this very morning I found the
“ following lines lying open on her
“ toilette; of which, as I find her
“ delicacy has prevented her sending
“ them, I herewith transmit you a
“ copy, that you may be a witness to
“ her unhappiness. — For heaven’s
“ sake say something to comfort her;
“ and believe me to be, with due
“ regard, Sir,

“ Your affectionate friend,

“ and servant,

“ J. BERTIE.

“ P. S. She often amuses herself

“ thus, in writing letters to you,

“ and

“ and tearing them : Yet never
“ saw I one before so circum-
“ stantial as the inclosed, which
“ demands your most serious
“ attention.”

“ TO CHARLES GOWER, Esq;

“ MY ever-dear Gower, how long
“ will you be absent ? Shall I never
“ more indulge my eyes with be-
“ holding you ? — I know why you
“ fly me—Yet 'tis a cruel kindness,
“ and such as will, surely, break my
“ heart, for it is deeply touched. I
“ ought not to say so much to you ;
“ but I know your tenderness for our
“ weak sex will excuse me.—Oh !
“ were that tenderness extended to
“ me ! There is not one on earth
“ with

“with whom I would change my
“situation.

“But now I am forced to waste
“my days in grief, my nights in
“complaining. You say you esteem
“and regard me ; cannot you give
“it a softer name ? Say but you
“love me, what power can oppose
“our union ?—Your circumstances !
“name them not : I am blessed with
“a sufficiency for both. But ah ! I
“fear the heart is wanting : love is
“not to be purchased. Where, then,
“is my delicacy ? your heart, I fear,
“is fixed on some more worthy ob-
“ject.—But I will cease to persecute
“you. Yes, thou virtuous, generous,
“but cruel man, I will fly far away

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“ from you, and never more disturb
“ your peace. Abroad there are
“ many such retreats for those, who,
“ like me, have been unhappy.—Yet
“ ah! how can I make a sacrifice to
“ heaven of a sinful heart devoted to
“ love and you!—Help me, thou
“ dear undoer of my peace, help me,
“ if thou canst, to accomplish this
“ most difficult of all tasks.—Alas!
“ like one misled by enchantments,
“ the scene is shifted before me; all
“ is desolation; all my prospects of
“ promised bliss are vanished; my
“ sun of joy is set; and I wander,
“ in vain, searching that happiness
“ which I now assuredly shall never
“ find on earth—Mean while, I hear
“ you vilified by those who never
“ knew

“ knew what real worth was, and I
“ dare not but be silent. If not to
“ console me, come then, at least, to
“ vindicate your own injured cha-
“ racter. The very sight of that
“ open front, that noble boldness,
“ will entirely silence your adver-
“ saries. Oh! let your presence,
“ then, once more gratify

“ ISABELLA.”

Hapless Isabella! fatal passion!
Thus, Selwyn, is my easy heart
doomed to suffer; and while I have
griefs, peculiar to myself, enough to
bear me down, thus do I feel for
sorrows not my own. But what
shall I do with the dear forlorn one?
To see her, is but to add fuel to the
E 2 flame.

flame. I will write to her yet again; I will endeavour that way to console her, and fill her heart with resignation and peace. I am too much affected; I must drop my pen. Believe me to be

Your ever-faithful

GOWER.



L E T T E R XI.

From the same to the same.

June 25.

I HAVE written to Isabella and Dr. Bertie. Heaven grant my letters may answer my intentions; for sure she is in great distress of mind. Indeed, my friend, I am not
myself

myself less tortured ; but to Providence I commit myself, and my future fortunes : it is enough for us to act our parts below ; let heaven dispose the rest.

Mr. Ramble, who is arrived here some time since, is a strange young man ; yet he makes himself agreeable to Sir George : Harriet is perpetually teasing him, but Miss Charlotte keeps him at a great distance. She grows reserved, and melancholy ; however, we had, of late, a conversation*, in which she displayed equal sound sense, and goodness of heart. This is the second time I have complimented her, and perhaps too warmly and particularly ; for she has seemed rather offended at

* The same mentioned in Letter VI.

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it. I therefore withdrew each time respectfully, being unwilling to confuse her*.

It is said Sir John Gretton is expected here soon, who is to take the whole family with him to London, but on what occasion I know not; yet I tremble while I write. Ah! should that dear angelic creature be matched unworthily, what a heart-breaking would it be to her! what a disgrace to her relations! But let me hope a better fortune will attend such goodness. Yet when I reflect on the strict obedience she ever holds indispensable towards parents and guardians; while I applaud her sentiments, I cannot but be fearful,

* See Letters III. and VI.

lest

lest they should, some time or other, lead her to sacrifice her own happiness, and her adorable person, to the caprice of others, who, perhaps, may fall as far short of her in prudence, as they exceed her in years.

Captain Seymour and Mr. Ramble are for ever disputing; and but this very morning I surpris'd them, at such high words as might, perhaps, have had some very disagreeable consequences, had I not interfered: yet neither of them would tell me the occasion of their quarrel. Ramble, indeed, appeared ashamed to do it, and the captain seem'd to look on it as beneath him. Sir George affects to regard me more coolly than usual,

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and Harriet checks, in my presence, the lively sallies of her wit. What am I to think of all this? You have often told me, in compliment, that I possessed a great deal of penetration. Sincerely I assure you, that I am often afraid to use what little share I have of that quality, lest it should lead me to think disadvantageously of others; for well I know, that a prejudice, once conceived, is hard to be eradicated; and I should tremble at the thought of injuring any one, even in my private opinion. To you, my friend, I dare to speak these sentiments freely; to others they might, perhaps, have too much the appearance of hypocrisy, a vice I have ever strove most sincerely to avoid.

But

But I have been so full of my own affairs, Mr. Selwyn, that I have scarcely so much as bestowed a thought on yours. May I ask how your affair goes on with the friend of my Charlotte, the lovely Arabella? and when you heard from your worthy brother? I hope the advice I gave you, if you have not benefited by it, has, at least, done you no injury with your relations. I suppose we must not expect you in England till the next spring. If lady Isabella goes abroad, it is more than probable I shall retire, likewise, from my native country, and seclude myself, tho' not in a monastery, in some solitude, where I may live at ease, and free from a bustling world. I mean

not as a hermit in a cave, cut off from life, and the social converse of men ; but in some small town, or village, free from the hurry of life, and its anxieties, where more simple manners, and a more artless innocence, prevail.

That these resolutions, in general, are the result of disappointments, I well know ; and therefore I have used all my rhetoric to dissuade Isabella from pursuing hers ; yet, should she persist, I never shall be able to stay behind : the ruin of so fair a frame, and so noble a mind, together with my own griefs, will bear so heavy on me, that they will render me unfit for the conversation of my friends. I am but man ; and tho' I know the
duties

duties of resignation, it will be difficult for me to practise them in a higher degree; yet while I see, I mourn the defect of my imperfect nature, which, when the free spirit would soar beyond her house of clay, still pulls her back, and keeps her prisoner there.

I am tedious, I am prolix; yet I know my friend will excuse what I write from the fulness of my heart, that heart which ever was, and ever will be, devoted to you, whilst I am

GOWER.

LET-

L E T T E R XII.

MISS ARABELLA HALE to MISS
CHARLOTTE CARLETON.

* June 20.

I AM ever obliged to you, my dear,
for your kind remembrance of the
poor, almost forsaken Arabel. But
for heaven's sake, Charlotte, what
are you about at Sir George's? We
have heard you were already as good
as married; and to whom in the
world do you think? What! to Mr.
Gower? say you, sighing.—No, not
to Mr. Gower; no such luck; but
to the very virtuous and accom-
plished Mr. Leland. You are, no

* This is the first of this lady's letters that
has come to the hands of the editor.

doubt,

doubt, surprised, and I am not less so; for I have not the least idea whence such a report could take its rise, since Leland is a man whom I believe you never saw above three times in your life, and whom, I am very certain, you despise, notwithstanding all his apparent qualifications. Indeed, my dear, I think your case is very hard; and I would, in good truth, have you pitch upon some other, in order to damp this report. There is Mr. Ramble, you say—"Too rakish."—Captain Seymour—"He wants that winning softness."—But Mr. Gower, (now your heart is at your mouth, my dear) what think you of him? There is a man!

man!—such another the whole kingdom can scarcely produce. Well, positively, he must be the man.—

Now don't be angry with me ; for I vow and declare, I wish you better than you do yourself. But, seriously speaking, my dear, is it not strange that this man, who, I hear, speaks every where of you with the greatest regard, and whose visit, if I discern aright, is made entirely on your account*, should never open his lips to make any proposals either to you, or your guardian?

You are too sincere, I am sure, to pretend they would not be acceptable to you ; since, according to your

* Miss Hale mistook, in this point. See Mr. Gower's own account of the matter in Let. XI.

own

own account of him (as well as that of others) he is one, who would do honour to a woman's affections : And there is nothing I could wish more sincerely than an union between you. But what, in the name of wonder, do the captain and Ramble stay with you for ? You seem to think the former has a regard for Harriet : if so, surely he takes but a poor way of shewing it. He is a strange man ; I don't know what to think of these new converts : and as to Ramble, were I in your place, I believe I should heartily wish he would take a journey to London again.

The letter from Sir John surprises me : what can he mean ? Sure

Leland

Leland is not the noble and worthy person he intends you; this is all a mystery: neither am I thoroughly informed, indeed, of the family connexions of Mr. Gower, tho' he is generally said to be a nephew of Lord Sommers. If it be so, what can induce the viscount to disown so worthy a kinsman?

My good aunt wonders what I do with so many letters, and shrewdly suspects that some of them are from the men-creatures; but my uncle cries, "Sister, sister, let the girl
 "alone; we were all young once: I
 "don't see but she is prudent
 "enough: and as to her merri-
 "ment, why, it is diverting. Come
 "hither,

“hither, Arabel, and sit down by
“me, child, and I’ll tell how I us’d
“to do, when I courted poor dear
“Nancy.” And then he goes on,
in his good-natured, tiresome way,
to tell stories, which, however in-
sipid in themselves, yet, I must own,
are rendered diverting by his manner.

Do not chide me, Charlotte; I
know the old gentleman has a good
heart: nor would I thus observe up-
on him to any one but yourself. I
wish I could, with justice, give my
aunt as good a character; but, surely,
she is one of the most disagree-
able, splenetic creatures heaven ever
formed.

Thanks

Thanks to her, I am to be tormented with the addresses of a most despicable fop, while the dear man, on his return from France, will, in all probability, be forbid to visit me.

Well, I never shall have patience with this man. To-morrow I expect him. I will give you, then, the history of our meetings. Till when adieu.

ARABELLA HALE.

L E T.

L E T T E R XIII.

From the same to the same.

June 22.

WELL, the fiery trial is over. This morning my aunt came into my chamber, crying, "Come, niece, *descend*—here is Mr. Half-ford come to pay his *devoirs* to you: I told you he would be punctual." I would fain have stayed, and made him wait as long as possible; but she took me by the hand, and insisted on having the pleasure of introducing me to my knight.—When we *descended* (as my aunt phrases it) to the parlour—Bless me, what a sight presented itself to my view!—A poor, diminutive, deformed fellow,

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fellow, who strove to set off his person with all the fopperies of an extravagant dress, and all the affectation of a most complete coxcomb.—Forgive me, Charlotte, I could not help laughing in his face, and turning my cheek, when he saluted me.

When we were left alone, he began to play off a thousand ridiculous airs, which only served to heighten the ill opinion I had conceived of him.—For my own part, I sat sullenly silent, and was heartily glad (for the first time) to see my aunt enter the room. “Well, niece, said she, I dare say you have been well entertained.”—“Oh yes, said my lover; I have been entertaining Miss, à la mode de François, I assure you.”—“Sir,

“Sir, no-body doubts your abilities,”
returned my aunt. “Let me perish,
“madam, but you are very com-
“plaissant.”——Miss is, indeed, a
“little bashful. She has, as yet, too
“much *delicateffe*; but that will wear
“off, in time. She was, to be sure,
“madam, being unacquainted with
“me, a little in the still-life way;
“but you, madam; let me die but
“you are acquainted with the *grand*
“*monde*.”——“I vow and declare, Sir,
“you gentlemen, that have travelled,
“are so polite, I protest (hiding her
face with her fan) “I quite blush to
“hear you.”

So, thought I, my aunt will en-
gage him for herself, presently; and
wickedly, while they were bowing
and

and court'ying to each other, I quitted the room. Nor did I find that I was missed, till my gentleman, being departed, my aunt returned to me, chid me for my unpoliteness, and read me some very ingenious lectures on behaviour in courtship.

As soon as I got quit of her, I shut myself up in my chamber, and gave an hour to reflexion on my situation, with regard to Selwyn. There is, as I have observed to you, a set of men who take a pleasure in vilifying him.—My aunt looks on him as a base fellow, who would have wished to seduce me: my uncle, indeed, is more moderate; and, were it not for his sister, would never have suffered
the

the introduction of a new lover, till he could have seen my old one in person, and known what he had to urge in his defence : but they are so fearful of being deluded by his manner of writing, that both have agreed to receive no letters from him, and to permit me to receive none : while, for my own part, I am surpris'd he does not think more of his and your

ARABELLA HALE.

P. S. Pray let me hear from you frequently, and take care to send me every particular relating to Mr. Gower ; since it may, possibly, lie in my power to serve you both : Ask me not how, but depend, when it is possible, I will. Adieu.

L E T.

L E T T E R XIV.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to DAVID
PAYNE.

Dear PAYNE,

July 3.

WHEN this comes to your hands, you will understand that I am in circumstances not very agreeable; from which I doubt not but you will make it your business to extricate me. You have ever been useful to me hitherto; prove yourself so now, and command my services for ever.

You are not unacquainted with my intrigue with Emilia, the daughter of Bland, and its consequences: you know I first deceived her, credulous as she was, with a
false

false marriage, and afterwards spirited her away to Ireland. She is now returned, and at the worst time she could possibly have pitched upon: for I have no time for cast-off mistresses, since I have wound myself so far into the good graces of Sir John Gretton, that I am just on the point of making my addresses to his niece. By my soul she is one of the finest girls the sun ever shone on! but think not I am, on that account, going to commit *absolute* matrimony, properly so called, and dwindle into the tame, fond husband.—No, David, that will never do: but she will have such a portion as will heal all the breaches my pleasures have made in my fortune. I will therefore marry

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F

her,

her, enjoy her till I am sated with revelling in her charms, and then hasten away for Italy, where I have other schemes, not ripe, as yet, for execution.

Now these things premised, thou, David, must be the necessary hand, and the *ignis fatuus* to mislead Emilia Bland any-where from me; and to sooth, if possible, Charlotte Carleton to my arms; at least, to continue the deception I have so happily begun with Sir John Gretton.

Inclosed I have sent thee a plan of operations: stick to them, and thou wilt amaze even me. For how well soever I may plot, the event will lie upon the nicety of execution. Take notice,

notice, however, of these particulars.

—Emily is weak, especially in one thing, and that is, her vanity: take her there, and you will succeed; which is the foundation of what I have laid down.—Sir John Gretton is positive, and very fond of being complimented with the authority of a parent: it is thus Charlotte manages him; do you the same.—Sir George Arnold is of a very different disposition: he is free and affable, but open to flattery, full of talk, and extremely fond of the pleasures of the bottle: we must attack him accordingly.

And now, when thou hast read my plan, if thou dost not say I am a

100 The Force of Nature; or,

very Machiavel in politics, thou hast not the head I supposed thee to have. But not to take to myself too much honour, I will fairly own, we have con-
ned it over between my lord M****, myself, and young Edmonds, who bears a part in our scheme thou little thinkest of, but far inferior to thine.

Farewel,—Let me hear this letter has come safe to hand. Obey orders, and be prosperous.

LELAND.

P. S. Whatever you may hear, let nothing ever induce you to suppose we are found out; for that were impossible, unless thou or the devil himself should forsake us.—Charlotte must be mine, if

I should even be obliged, at last,
to ask assistance of my friends
in matters of force.

* * * The foregoing letter inclosed
a plan, as mentioned, which never
came to the hands of the editor:
however, the event will be seen in
the course of the work.



L E T T E R X V .

From the same to the same.

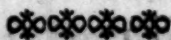
July 7.

GIVE me joy, my dear friend,
matters go on swimmingly;
and I am to meet Sir John and his
niece in London within these two
days. I have told such a story of

reformation, as would almost make thee believe me; but I fear the little prude will be more troublesome to deal with: yet, as I suppose her open, like the rest of her sex, to vanity, I think I shall, by praising her fine sense and accomplishments, and pretending myself a convert (she is fond of converts) to her sentiments, I may stand some chance of success. But, in the mean time, we must, by all means, embarrass Miss Hale, and keep her in the country; and this, I think, I have a scheme for doing effectually. Charlotte, I find, is averse to this journey, even before she knows whom she is to meet: what will she say, when she finds it to be me? I stand but poorly in her opinion:

nion: however, as I said before, I am resolved to carry the point. I am indeed informed, by my emissaries, that I shall have Mr. Gower for a rival; but I may find means, I doubt not, to remove him; if it be but by imposing on his weakness by some romantic tale of *Virtue in Distress*: for never was La Mancha's knight more ridiculously warm, on such occasions. Besides, I have another scheme for him. There is, indeed, no fear we should fail; for his lordship is a great man at these affairs, in his own department. I can well manage mine; thou art not less fit for that assigned to thee; and Edmonds might execute his with less art than he is master of. What

prudence can stand against our united efforts? every fort must surrender to us; and we shall be famous to all the world.



Thy letter * has given me, indeed, fresh spirits: I am glad we are likely to get rid of this peevish girl; she might have done us much mischief. I wish you joy, David, of your conquest; and would have you convey her, as soon as possible, to the nearest port, and hasten to act the remaining part of the farce. As to the supplies you mention, you may depend on being furnished with them; but the additional clause in your letter, concerning his lordship's

* This letter is not inserted,

house-

houfemaids, has made us all laugh :
however, you fhall have the enjoy-
ment of her ; ſhe ſhall be ſent to-
wards where you live, on an errand
without end, ſo as to drop into o ur
ſphere, and we will leave the reſt to
you. Farewel ; for I muſt write to
the earl ; and have, beſides, much
other buſineſs on my hands : ſo haſten
to ſubſcribe myſelf

Your friend,

LELAND.

LETTER XV.

From the same to the Earl of M****.

July 10.

ALL things, my lord, are now ready for execution. I expect Sir John and Miss Carleton daily. All depends on your removing Gower and Seymour from her, as they will come to town with the family.—Ramble, I hope, is staunch—And as for your affair, there is little danger but we shall bring things to bear, so as that Mr. Gower's cousin Massey may be brought to leave your lordship that fortune which he once was in hopes of. As to the lord Sommers, nothing can be expected from him. Miss Hale will have enough
on

on her hands, thanks to my diligence; and then if we fail in all fair means, there will be no one to remove but Sir John, should there be occasion for force.

I think I may depend on your lordship for the completion of this plan. The lady Isabella and Mrs. Arden will not, surely, fail to take up his attention; and if there were occasion to doubt of Ramble, Eliza might well be thrown in his way.

David has sent for supplies, and I have promised liberally: he must be kept going; for he is a very useful hand, and without him we can do little or nothing.

I con-

108 The Force of Nature ; or,

I conclude this letter in haste, as the time is but short, and much must be done in it. Farewel, my lord: believe me to be, sincerely and wholly,

Yours,

LELAND.



LETTER XVI.

The Earl of M**** to ROBERT
LELAND, Esq;

July 13.

I SUPPOSE by this time your operations are begun. As I hear the uncle and his charge are in town, I have taken care Gower should be plagued and perplexed enough

enough with letters, and there is one master-stroke I have yet in reserve for him, which, I think, he cannot easily wind himself out of, and which may be likely to prevent his ever troubling us more; but as you can have no share in it, it signifies little to communicate it to you.

Suffice it to say, that I am coming to town myself, with all speed, and shall bring one with me whom you little expect to see, and who will prove very useful to us, while he thinks he is only gratifying *himself*. This, Leland, is the very masterpiece of policy, when we can turn and wind, by our coolness, fiery-tempered people as we would a war-horse:

110 The Force of Nature; or,
horse: but this, to thee, I need not
expatiate on.

The affair of Massey is worth our
serious notice; for Gower does not
so much as know that he has such
a relation; and his fortune will be
well worth my acceptance.

I laugh to think, thus disappointed
in every expectation, and embar-
rassed on every side, how this pious,
gentle, christian philosopher, as he
has been termed, will rant and rave,
curse his ill stars, and his worse im-
prudence, and turn villain out of
spite. By heaven I must lay down
my pen to enjoy the fancy. I will
only add, that I am thine, as here-
tofore,

M****.

L E T.

LETTER XVII.

MIS CHARLOTTE CARLETON to
MIS ARABELLA HALE.

July 20.

HERE are we arrived at last,
my dear Arabella, tired and
fatigued, and none of us in the best
of humours; yet we have kept all
together, except Ramble (for Sir
Sir John would have it so) and he is
gone somewhere about his own bu-
siness; but we have no very heavy
loss of him.

My breast is in a strange com-
motion: I cannot think what they
intend to do with me. Your men-
tion of Leland has frightened me: I
think even such a coxcomb as yours
would

112 The Force of Nature ; or,

would not be so disagreeable to me.

Fie ! fie ! I must chide you, my too lively friend : how can you treat your relations in so ludicrous a manner ? You should remember (setting aside the reverence due to elders) Arabella, *their* honour is, in many respects, *yours* ; and if they seek to impose on you any thing that is unreasonable, you should argue the matter with them in all due submission, as becomes a child.

Heaven knows how much I may want advice of this kind myself ; and then where am I to seek it, if my friend, my Arabella, cannot administer it ? But the door opens ; and I must drop my pen. How my heart flutters !

Mr. Gower !



Mr. Gower! and the most disconcerted I ever beheld him; yet he smiles on me, and affects to hide some inward uneasiness. At entrance he fixed his eyes full on me, a thing very unusual with him, then heaved a sigh, turned aside, and wiped them. Sure something must have struck very deep into his mind, to call a tear from those manly eyes!—He spoke but few words while he stayed in the room, yet those few seemed to carry mystery in them.—“Miss Charlotte, said he, I have a thousand fears for you; but be comforted—act with your usual prudence, and all may yet be well.—I am a stranger, but permit me thus far; since your welfare
is

114 The Force of Nature ; or,
is *very dear* to me :” and pronouncing
these words, he left me.

Sir John keeps a watchful eye
even over my looks, and Sir George
seems as one whose heart labours
with what his tongue dares not give
utterance to.

A letter ! and from my uncle, too ;
I must stop to read it. Excuse my
curiosity, as you know the occasion.



O H ! Arabella, oh ! my friend,
support me, comfort me ; it is Le-
land, Leland himself, that I am de-
signed for : till this very moment I
knew not how much I hated him.
But I will hasten to throw myself
at the feet of my guardians, and try,
if

if possible, to ward off this heavy blow. Sure they will not suffer their Charlotte, their poor orphan-charge, to be thus sacrificed!—No—Sir John himself could not pronounce the cruel sentence with his lips. My prayers, my tears shall move them: but the emotions of my mind are too strong to permit me to write any farther. So here concludes

Your distressed

CHARLOTTE.

L E T.

LETTER XVIII.

From the same to the same.

July 23.

I AM now completely unhappy. I have seen Leland; I have been obliged to suffer his hateful addresses: but never shall I be prevailed on to join myself with him in matrimony. Nothing, sure, could be more preposterous than such a design!—My poor heart is bleeding:—I have addressed myself to Sir John, but in vain; and my other once kind guardian seems now to be actuated only by his spirit, and to do just as he directs him. I have formerly heard this Leland characterized as a man of very bad principles, but now
he

he is become a man of prudence, and sound morals. Strange metamorphosis!

I long, my dear Arabella, to hear from you: oppressed as I am myself, I yet fear for my friend. But, surely, your relations will be too kind, too tender of your welfare, to force you into the arms of a nauseous coxcomb. As for mine, they seem to have lost all that dear regard they once had for me. Helpless orphan that I am, I have no father, no mother to fly to for protection! But these reflexions are, I am sensible, only so many aggravations of a grief in itself but too insupportable. It is impossible to conceive how much this Leland is my aversion!—His image haunts me
like

118 The Force of Nature ; or,
like a ghost, by day ; and last night,
when over-wearied nature would
have sunk to rest, he stood before
my eyes glaring like a ghost, and
with a dagger ready to plunge in my
bosom. Methought he cried, " Die,
wretched wife !" and suddenly strik-
ing at me, vanished, and, in his
room, appeared the body of Mr.
Gower, all covered with wounds.

Sure something fatal hangs over
our unhappy family !—That excellent
young man rode out this morning
at day-break, unattended, in a me-
lancholy humour, and has not been
heard of since. Captain Seymour,
too, is gone, we know not where ;
and thus our friends melt from our
side like snow before the sun-beams.

I am

I am forbid to see either my uncle or Sir George alone, and they threaten even to deny me pen, ink, and paper: I have, however, secured a pencil and writing materials, which I have hidden: it is the first time, Arabel, your Charlotte was ever reduced to such a meanness. But thus it is, my dear, that rigid relations too often inspire, unwittingly, artful contrivances into the bosom of native simplicity.

There is a great hurry below-stairs; all the house seems in action: Heaven knows what they are about; but all things are to me indifferent, since I am doomed to be unhappy.

I find myself very faint; my flow of spirits fails;—I fear a fit of sickness

ness will be the result of these extraordinary perturbations.—Adieu, my dear; I know not when you will hear again from your

CHARLOTTE.



LETTER XIX.

Mr. GOWER to J. SELWYN, Esq;

July 21.

MY friend! console me in my afflictions; for the hand of heaven has multiplied them upon me. I scarcely know, indeed, since my early youth, that I ever attained a wish I had formed on earth. Sure it is intended to induce me to fet my heart upon a better state.

My

My Charlotte is lost to me, irrecoverably lost ; and I am involved in the most cruel misfortunes.—Two days after we arrived in London, when she was given to understand, that she must prepare herself to receive the addresses of Mr. Leland, it is scarce possible to conceive how much the fair-one was affected by this unexpected stroke. Her bright eyes were dimmed with tears, and her fair bosom heaved with spontaneous sighs ; yet Sir John remains unmoved. I attempted, myself, to enter into a conversation with him on this subject, but in vain : he is deaf to all remonstrances, and seems resolved to make a sacrifice of his lovely niece. Oh! Selwyn, Oh! my friend,

the day that sees her wedded to Leland will behold me stretched on my funeral bed; for I am wounded beyond the power of art to cure. What if my lips have never yet disclosed my passion? yet sure my eyes, those faithful interpreters of love, have told the fair-one, a thousand times, how much I adore her. Yes, Selwyn, thy friend is at last become the very slave of woman;—but then of such a woman—and sure, if I interpret not too partially, her every word and action speaks a mutual flame: her sighs, her tears, with tenderest eloquence declare it: and must she be doomed the victim of a villain? Forbid it virtue! forbid it courage! Myself will rush and snatch her

her from him, even at the altar. For what shrine, or vows, however sacred in themselves, can justify such a preposterous union?

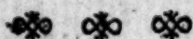
—But, alas! I rave. It is beyond my power to serve her; and we are both doubly unhappy, if love for me (which ought to be my joy and boast) has taken possession of her breast.— Alas! I am so poor, I am bankrupt even of sorrow; I have not even a heart to bestow. Oh Isabella! why did my ill fortune present me to thee? Better I had perished for want of necessaries, than thus involved thee and myself in misery.

When I would speak the words of comfort to my Charlotte, my tongue

124 The Force of Nature; or,

falters, and I know not how to address her. She perceives it, and it heightens her confusion. How great an unhappiness it is to possess sentiments too refined! an heart too tender!

To-morrow is the dreadful day on which she is to meet this her new lover. I must not see him, since I cannot answer for the consequences. Heaven preserve me from that rashness I have so often censured in others, and keep my hands pure from blood!



ANOTHER letter from Dr. Bertie, concerning lady Isabella. What an unfortunate wretch am I, that can bring nothing to my friends but heart-breaking

breaking and uneasiness ! My heart is even ready to burst at the reflexion. I tremble while I break the seal, yet I must break off to read it. Adieu, for the present. Pity your unhappy

GOWER.



L E T T E R XX.

Mr. GOWER, in continuation.

July 23.

MISFORTUNE on misfortune ! When will the measure of my sorrows be full ?—A letter, written in behalf of the poor Isabella, informed me, that she was greatly out of order ; and that a slow

126 The Force of Nature; or,

fever preyed on her spirits, which it was deemed impossible to remove, as being occasioned by an indisposition of the mind, rather than of the body. She adjured me, by every thing that was sacred, to let her see me once more. I paused—I hesitated—Tenderness, at last, prevailed; and in the evening I went to visit her.

By her own orders I was shewn into a darkened chamber, which the feeble rays of a lamp alone illuminated, and which seemed contrived to strike the beholder with a solemn awe. Reclined on her couch lay the unhappy fair, who, in a faint voice, desired me to come near, and advancing her head from the pillow, “Behold, said she, cruel! behold
your

“your triumph!”—I started back with astonishment, to see what havock love and grief had made with her beauties. Those fine black eyes, which used to shine like stars, were now dying, as it were, in their sockets; that cheek, where once the lilly and the rose were united, was now pale and wan; and her whole form was meagre, and emaciated. I wept; the tears of humanity forced their way; and she was still more affected at the sight. “And do you then pity me?” said she: “have you, at last, an heart?” “I pity you, indeed,” answered I, sighing, “and heartily wish it were in my power to bring you relief; but, “alas! I am myself unhappy.” A recapitulation of several past events

G 4

ensued,

ensued, which served but to revive old sorrows, and overwhelm us both with grief. Deeply affected as I myself was, I endeavoured to console her by promises of the tenderest friendship ; but what is friendship, when compared with love ? She spent two full hours in conversation of this kind with me, of which that worthy clergyman Dr. Bertie, alone, was witness. And here often would her delicacy interpose, and cover her pale cheek with a transient blush ; then, full of conscious shame, she would accuse herself, and bid me fly for ever from her presence ; as often would the powerful workings of nature bid her recall and speak most tenderly to me : such were the struggles
of

of reason and passion in the mind of this excellent lady. Our interview probably would not have broke off here, if it had not been judged highly necessary for her to take some rest after the ferment my visit had occasioned in her spirits.

I departed, rather dead than alive, from her presence, and was walking down St. James's street with a slow and melancholy pace, when a person on a sudden struck me smartly on the shoulder, and, on turning round, I beheld captain Selby, an officer with whom I was formerly well acquainted, confronting me in a menacing posture. "Draw, Mr. Gower," said he, or retire with me, instantly,

130 The Force of Nature; or,

to some more private place." "Draw!"

ecchoed I; "for heaven's sake, captain

"Selby, how have I injured you?"

"In my love, as you know too well,"

returned he; "therefore defend

"yourself, or this moment is your

"last, by heaven!" He had his

sword drawn in his hand; and as

mine was in its scabbard, it was not

without some difficulty that I escaped

receiving his point in my breast be-

fore I could oppose my weapon:

but thus put on self-defence, I used

it, according to the laws of nature,

for my own preservation. What

would have been the event, I know

not, had not several officers at that

time came by, who knew him, and

interposed between us: yet he

would

would not be persuaded to go anywhere with them and me to reason the matter, but walked off sullenly; saying, "I might depend on hearing "from him." I followed his example, of leaving the company; and, calling a coach, drove home as fast as possible.

Late that evening I received a message to meet him, at a time and place appointed; to which I returned the following answer, which I inclose, that you may be enabled to judge, with the more propriety, of my conduct in this affair..

"S I R,
"I received your Note, which, I
"must confess, I think no less extra-
"ordinary than your unprovoked
" beha-

“ behaviour of last night. You seem
“ indeed to intimate, that I am your
“ rival in the affections of the lady
“ Isabella ; and add, you are sure she
“ loves me, and that she herself
“ has said so. Be this as it may,
“ I am by no means questionable for
“ any opinion that lady may please
“ to entertain of me : but I here de-
“ clare on my faith and honour, both
“ which I have ever held sacred, that
“ I entertain for her no other senti-
“ ments than those of friendship and
“ gratitude.—If such a declaration
“ proves not satisfactory to you, I
“ shall be sorry for it ; but must beg
“ absolutely to decline your invitation
“ to Hyde Park, since I can, by no
“ means think of imbruing my hands
“ in

“ in the blood of another, or sacri-
“ ficing a life which belongs not only
“ to myself, but to God, my king, and
“ my country. These sentiments are
“ not new ; many men, of approved
“ courage, have maintained, and do
“ still maintain them ; neither can
“ they any way injure my reputation,
“ since I am ever ready to defend my
“ life, when attacked by violence or
“ insults, and to prove my courage,
“ when put to the test, as you your-
“ self have, before this time, been
“ witness of.—This, however, I will
“ do ; if you will lay aside passion, I
“ will do myself the pleasure to at-
“ tend you early to-morrow at your
“ own lodgings, and satisfy you of the
“ innocence of GOWER.”

My

My messenger brought back word, the captain would be glad to see me at the time I mentioned ; and accordingly, this morning, I went thither. He was just risen, and received me with an air of coolness and solemn ceremony, which ill suited our former acquaintance. I strove, while we sat at breakfast, to enter on the subject which occasioned our present meeting, but he industriously avoided it ; and, there being another officer present, I did not press it so much as I should otherwise have done. When breakfast was over, captain Selby rose, and said he was engaged at a particular place, where he must beg my company ; he then walked to the door, and stepped into a coach which

was

was waiting for him. I hesitated whether or not I should follow him; but extending his hand in a very friendly manner, he invited me in. On the supposition that it would still be in my power to act as reason should dictate, I complied. The moment we entered the coach, he reassumed his gloomy reserve; and I found speaking to him would only render me ridiculous, since I could not obtain an answer: so that I was, in effect, obliged to observe the same fullen silence with himself. The carriage, which was a private gentleman's, stopped in Hyde Park; and when we got out, he made signs to the coachman to wait at a distance, and we walked till a rising ground,
and

and a cluster of trees hid us from his and from every other eye. Then the captain suddenly turned round, and thus addressed me : “ Sir, what I am now going to say will admit of no verbal reply : if you are not equally lost to honour and to shame, you will answer me with your sword. In short, Sir, you are a base, artful seducer of innocence, a villain, and, to complete the character, a liar.” — “ Captain Selby, have a care, said I” — “ No, Mr. Gower,” said he, drawing, “ I have no care of any farther injury you can do me. Will nothing provoke you ?” And so saying, he swung his sword round, and, with the hilt of it, struck me so violent a blow on the face,

face, as set my nose and mouth gushing out with blood, and then presented his point to my breast. Human nature could bear no farther. I drew to defend myself. We fought furiously, and he fell. I offered him every assistance in my power, but his high spirit was above receiving any; and he tore open his wounds as fast as I bound them up, till he fainted on the spot. I then ran, and called the servants, with whose help he was conducted to his house in Pall-mall. At the same time I surrendered myself to justice; and as the captain's hurts are not dangerous, bail has been taken for my appearance.

Mean time the affair has spread itself all over these cities, and my
return

138 The Force of Nature; or,
return to Sir George's is forbid.
Amongst those who have fought my
destruction in this affair, lord M****,
and Mr. Leland, stand foremost: the
latter has, no doubt, told the story,
with many exaggerations, to that
very family where I could wish to
stand in the highest estimation: and
I find myself deemed, by many, a
violater of oaths, a seducer of inno-
cence, and even an assassin; so pos-
sible it is for bad constructions to be
put on every the most necessary action
of our lives, in this frail, imperfect
state.

To complete my uneasiness, I hear
that Miss Charlotte Carleton's life is
likely to be rendered, one way or
other,

other, completely miserable; that is, she must either be tied for life to a villain, who would abuse and despise her, or be perpetually tormented by her relations, and hindered from enjoying the sweets of it. It seems Sir John, knowing Leland to be of a great estate, a member of parliament at present, and likely to be created a lord, has resolved, at all events, to have him for a nephew. Sir George too is taken with his appearance, which is very splendid, and pays, besides, great deference to his brother guardian's judgment, whom he looks on as a very Nestor. If I am not misinformed, their suspicion of my addressing her has been another motive for their endeavouring
to

to hasten this match, lest their ward might be thrown away on a *hypocrite*, an *alien*, an *outcast*, and a *beggar*, as Sir John is politely pleased to term me.

Captain Seymour (by the bye he has left me, and is gone I know not whither) has often expressed his sorrow that I could not at once make Isabella and myself happy by an union the most desirable, he said, in the world: but, as I have before observed, all other objections being set aside, I cannot think of so close a connexion with her. I love her with the tenderness of a relation, but cannot find room in my heart to burn for her with the ardour of a lover.

On

On the whole, I cannot but lament my weakness, in being led, after all my reflexion, into the duel I have related ; not only as it is bad in its consequences, but as it was, in some measure, a transgression of that prudence which ought ever to be the guard of virtue. I should not indeed have met captain Selby at all, or, at least, I ought by no means to have entered a carriage with him, and suffer it to be drove away at his discretion. It is thus, my friend, that the best of us run ourselves into evils which we are ever ready to term “ accidents,” or “ unavoidable misfortunes,” and then throw the blame of them on *fortune* ; or, in other words, complain of PROVIDENCE.

DENCE. All I can urge for myself in the present case is, the goodness of my intentions, and the innocence of my heart, of which heaven alone can be the proper judge. But, for my own part, I am now in a most disagreeable situation, and more so, by far, than when your friendly hand, and that of the generous Isabella, relieved me from a state of absolute want. My heart then was free from these wounds—My mind was calm, and divested of every other care but that for my future subsistence, and my character pure and irreproachable. But now a thousand perplexities encompass me round, like the waves of a troubled sea, and I wander about, the sport of misfortune,

fortune, neglected and forsaken by all but heaven, and crossed in every wish I have formed for my own good, and that of others. And all this without a fault of mine—No—let me here do strict justice on myself—One fault I acknowledge—A great one too; but great was the temptation, severe the repentance, and every reparation in my power has been made to the injured party, if indeed any but heaven (in the breach of its laws) was injured. Yet this one, this only crime, has been, as you may easily trace, the source of all my uneasiness; so careful should man be to keep himself spotless, in this world of wickedness.

To

To this false step I owe my first misfortunes, my first fight of, and unhappy dependance on, the lady Isabella ; to this alone my not daring to address Charlotte ; and, in a great measure, my present misfortune. Good heaven ! that such bitter consequences should attend a momentary satisfaction !

But I must conclude this long letter, since my business, you may well imagine, will require my attendance in many places ; the captain's wounds, lady Isabella's sickness, and my Charlotte's most unhappy situation, claim, at once, my attention. But you shall soon hear farther from your

GOWER.

L E T.

LETTER XXI.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to the Earl
of M****.

August 1.

SO, my lord, all promises success.
I have got Sir John Gretton's word that his niece shall be mine, and Sir George Arnold has given his honour that no one else shall address her; which is, really, a great deal to gain from him. The lady indeed is, as I expected, averse to the proposal: when I speak, she answers but with a sigh, or a tear. It is well for me that she is not one that is loud in reproaches; however, I play her as an angler does a fish upon his hook: if I give her line enough, I

doubt not but she will be mine. I know her high notions of honour and obedience to parents and guardians, and take care these shall be played off upon her to advantage.

How happened it thus, my lord, that young Selby was so much out in his parrying and thrusting? By G—d, I believe it is so long since he was at a fencing-school, that he has forgot it. Well, he is a mad-brained fellow ; but though he did not kill Gower, and get himself hanged out of the way, this affair, as we manage it, will turn out, no doubt, greatly to the advantage of our cause. I have told the story our own way, in most of the coffee-houses in Westminster.

Your

Your lordship may spread it in the city by means of your banker, and honest David Payne will take care to trumpet it all about the country, while young Edmonds will have it proclaimed under the very window of Miss Hale. Glorious chiefs, renowned in arts and arms, what havoc shall ye make in the hostile families of Arnold and Gower!

I find my rival has given bail for his appearance: Isabella's illness is increased: she has certainly been dishonoured by him, with all his sanctity. I firmly believe it is so; but be it, or be it not, I have taken care to spread such a report, and ground it on such authorities as shall not even

148 The Force of Nature; or,
admit of a doubt: my emissaries are
faithful, and well appointed; and I
dare trust them in propagating mis-
chief. I could add much more on
this subject; but as your lordship is
so well acquainted with me, I hold
it needless to say more than that I am
the humble imitator of you, and

Your devoted friend,

LELAND.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXII.

MISS CHARLOTTE CARLETON to
MISS ARABELLA HALE.

August 3.

NOT one word of comfort, my Arabella, for your friend, amidst her afflictions! Is this being kind to your Charlotte? But I will forbear reproaches, and proceed to inform you of my unhappy situation.

Since Mr. Leland's first visit, he has not omitted to come every day constantly to torment me: and as I have not been able to refrain from treating him with contempt, I have, consequently, fallen under the heavy displeasure of both my guardians.

He triumphs in this, and smiles upon me with an air of superiority, while my eyes are quenched in tears.

Cruel insult, on one who never injured him !

It is about three days since that he came into the parlour where I was sitting ; and, throwing himself into a chair, seated himself by me, attempting to take one of my hands, which, however, I withdrew hastily ; and he thus began. “ Madam, I cannot conceive what is the occasion I am thus thwarted and scorned by you : I profess it is what I never yet sustained from any woman.—Why am I disagreeable ? ” — “ If I must answer, then,”
replied

replied I, frankly, "Sir, it is because
" your principles are not mine, and
" because you are not the man of
" my choice." " And how long,
" madam, have you learned to reason
" in this manner? There was a time
" when the commands of your re-
" lations might have had weight;
" and let me tell you, madam,"—
" And let me tell *you*, Sir (said I, as-
suming a courage I could have
wished there were less occasion for)
" they would have little weight, in-
" deed, if I thought they authorized
" you to insult me."—He was a little
abashed; but he soon recovered his
usual assurance, and thus continued
his discourse: " I am sorry, madam,
" I should offend you; and still more

“ sorry that I am not the man of
 “ your choice. This I know, who-
 “ ever *he* be, and whatever he may
 “ pretend to, I am well assured he
 “ has it neither in his power or in-
 “ clination to make you more happy
 “ than the despised Leland. Yet
 “ tell him”—“ *Him! whom, Sir?*”—
 “ Mr. Gower, or whoever is to be
 “ the *happy man*.” This he said with
 a sneer. “ Tell him,” said he, “ he
 “ shall not triumph.” I was vexed; I
 coloured; and my anger, I believe,
 was too visible in my countenance.
 “ And who told you (replied I, silly
 enough) “ that Mr. Gower was the
 “ man?”—“ Pardon me, madam, I
 “ said not so; but *if* he was: how-
 “ ever, by your answer I perceive he
 “ *is,*

“is, and you are offended.” I felt my face glow like scarlet at this reply, and, with very little ceremony, quitted the room. This conversation, however, may serve to give you a specimen of the man’s delicacy, and how little he values the peace of the woman he solicits in marriage.

Be not now, my dear Arabel, too inquisitive into the secret movements of my heart: ask me not why I blushed; for I cannot tell you; I know not myself. Mr. Gower, you are very sensible, I have already told you, never made any the least advances to me; and, surely, if he had loved, he would.—Believe me, I would not speak thus freely to any but you.

154 The Force of Nature; or;

You know you have wished us united;
I fear it would prove an unhappy
union:—the world is loud against him,
and he has given still more occasion
to them by his late conduct respecting
the duel, and the lady Isabella—
I fear, I fear he is an hypocrite; and
if he be, never must we look more
for Truth in man; for sure she seemed
to sit upon his brow. But what is
he to me? My poor heart is already
oppressed enough, without adding
to the weight. Heaven only knows
to what I am reserved.



August 5.

Sir George has vouchsafed to pay
me a visit, and to converse with me in
my chamber. I took this opportunity

tunity of reasoning with him, as he seemed in a better humour than I have for some time seen him. "Permit me, Sir," said I, "to ask you, why you and my uncle, who have ever been so tender of me, and, since the death of my dear mother, have thought fit to leave me to the guidance of my own prudence, and I hope without occasion of reproach;—permit me, Sir, I say, to ask you why, on the sudden, you, my guardians, have determined to force my inclinations in so weighty a matter as matrimony?"—"That question, child," replied Sir George, "comes rather too late: our reasons for desiring this match, were given you

156 The Force of Nature; or,

“ you in Sir John’s letter*, where he
“ mentions the birth, fortune, and
“ accomplishments; and the only
“ objection that could possibly be sup-
“ posed to lie against it, was the free
“ manner in which that gentleman
“ has lived; but, believe me, child,
“ if you are obstinately determined
“ never to marry till you find one
“ free from such blemishes, you will
“ stand a fair chance of dying a vir-
“ gin, or being married to some ef-
“ feminate coxcomb, whom nature
“ disowns for a man.—Farther I will
“ inform you, Miss Charlotte, that
“ we had but too much reason to
“ suspect your having conceived a

* That letter is not to be found in this col-
lection.

“ passion

“passion for our late guest, Mr. Gower,
“who is, indeed, every way unworthy
“of you.”—“For Mr. Gower, Sir!”
echoed I—“He never, I am sure,
“opened his mouth to me on the
“subject of love.”—“The greater
“his art then, who could inspire
“that passion, and root it so deeply
“in your breast, without any formal
“declaration”—(I coloured ex-
cessively, and he proceeded) “Leland
“has indeed, as I said before, been a
“free liver; but he has left off those
“courses now, and is resolved to
“marry, and reform; and you ought
“to thank heaven, in such case, for
“making you an instrument of lu-
“ring back to the paths of virtue so
“sensible, so accomplished a man;—
“in

“ in his worst of times, however, he
“ could never match Gower for base-
“ ness. Ingratitude, debauchery, and
“ murder, are but sport to him, and
“ all hid under the cloak of seeming
“ sanctity.—Oh! Charlotte! Char-
“ lotte! what a choice would you
“ make! But you see your honour
“ and peace are safer in your guar-
“ dians keeping than in your own.
“ It will not be long, however, be-
“ fore they will be again in your own
“ custody*; but we shall, in the mean
“ while, take such measures as may
“ prevent you, if possible, from run-
“ ning on your own destruction.
“ You have asked me why you are
“ not now to be trusted, as formerly.

* She was very near twenty-one.

“ The

“ The reason, my dear, is plain ; you
“ were not then in love ; and could
“ you divest yourself of that passion
“ now, you might be trusted again.”
“ Strange, Sir George,” (said I, somewhat warmly interrupting him) “ that
“ this love you mention should be a
“ secret to none but me.”—“ It is no
“ less strange than true, replied he,
“ for every one knows it ; how little
“ soever you may be, or pretend to
“ be, acquainted with your own
“ heart.—But my purpose, in this
“ visit, was to warn you against nursing
“ in your bosom so fatal a passion,
“ to argue with you as a rational being,
“ and to set before you the danger
“ of encouraging even the most
“ distant hope in Mr. Gower, on one
“ hand,

“ hand [Do you mind, my Arabella,
the most distant hope!] “ and the
“ advantage of receiving Mr. Leland’s
“ addresses on the other. To sum
“ up the whole, Mr. Gower is a base,
“ seducing, ungrateful hypocrite, pos-
“ sessed of a scanty estate, and that
“ not his legal right; an alien and
“ outcast from his own family, and
“ an incendiary in ours. Mr. Leland,
“ though he has had his faults, is
“ now a reformed man, a sensible,
“ brave, and accomplished gentle-
“ man; has great friends and con-
“ nexions, is in expectation of a
“ title, possesses above two thousand
“ pounds *per annum*, and loves you
“ to distraction. With the former
“ you will be unavoidably miserable;
“ with

“ with the latter it is your own fault
“ if you do not taste every happiness
“ mortals can experience below. I
“ am therefore to tell you, that your
“ uncle, whose authority, as a re-
“ lation, I suppose you respect more
“ than mine, expects, after our deign-
“ ing thus to reason with you, your
“ chearful compliance with a mea-
“ sure which is taken merely to esta-
“ blish your felicity.”

He ceased, and waited, as for my answer, which I thus returned him.

“ My dear protector! my ever-ho-
“ noured guardian!—hear me, hear
“ your Charlotte. What can I an-
“ swer to what you have advanced,
“ but that I cannot love Mr. Leland?

“ I have

“ I have many fears that he is not
“ the reformed person you think
“ him, and then what a dreadful ex-
“ periment must I make, and how
“ fatal may be the consequences !
“ But admitting him to be every
“ thing you are inclined to believe
“ him, still what is all this, if I *can-*
“ *not* regard, as I ought, the man
“ who is to be my husband ? Love
“ is, at best, involuntary ; I am sorry
“ I find it so. Press me not, then, to
“ act, at once, contrary to my incli-
“ nations and my conscience ; and,
“ in my turn, I promise never to en-
“ ter into any treaty of marriage
“ with any one without your joint
“ consent and approbation. As to
“ Mr. Gower, whatever may or might
“ have

“ have been his sentiments concern-
“ ing me, I declare solemnly, in the
“ face of heaven, he never once pro-
“ fessed, or even hinted them to me,
“ farther than a friend ; and I neither
“ do, nor will, hold any secret cor-
“ respondence with him. Having
“ avowed all this, thus humbly [fall-
ing on my knees] “ I intreat your
“ dispensation with this point of
“ duty, and your intercession with
“ my uncle on the same account. - It
“ is not for me to dictate ; I only pe-
“ tition for indulgence, the grant of
“ which shall never make me pre-
“ sume on the favour, or slacken my
“ duty or respect to the best of
“ guardians, and of friends.”

This

This speech, and the manner in which it was delivered, affected Sir George. He raised me, and, in a soft tone of voice, said, “ I am
“ sorry, Charlotte, heartily sorry,
“ for this only occasion we have had
“ to call your prudence in question ;
“ but I will go to your uncle, re-
“ present to him the present state of
“ your mind, and get, at least, the
“ marriage fixed for a more distant
“ day than was at first intended, that
“ you may have more time allowed
“ you to reconcile yourself to the
“ match.” And so saying, he hurried away, without waiting my answer. So you see, Arabella, they were in great haste to fix the day. Heaven direct me, and inspire them
with

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with a better consideration. But it is time to put an end to this letter, and assure you how much I am

Your affectionate

CHARLOTTE.



LETTER XXIII.

MISS CHARLOTTE CARLETON,
in Continuation.

August 7.

OUR conference, my dear, has produced a letter from Sir John, which was this morning delivered into my hands, much about the time I expected Leland's customary visit; from which I am, however,
for

166 The Force of Nature ; or,
for some time, delivered. See the
contents.

“ Cousin CHARLOTTE,

“ Sir George has reported to me a
“ conversation he had with you, in
“ which you seem artfully enough to
“ have supported the wrong cause.
“ I admire at the address with which
“ you argue against your own hap-
“ piness. Believe me, Charlotte, these
“ are but vain delusions of youth,
“ and the remains of a childish pas-
“ sion you have conceived for one of
“ the greatest hypocrites on earth.
“ *You will never enter into a treaty of*
“ *marriage without our consent.* Yes,
“ you can promise ; but people in
“ love

“ love are not to be trusted with,
“ themselves; and you must there-
“ fore excuse us in this point. For
“ my own part, I cannot help saying,
“ I think you assume too much, in
“ taking the consideration of this
“ matter to yourself, and arraigning
“ our judgement. However, thus
“ much shall be granted: you shall
“ be allowed a fortnight’s time to
“ reflect on what has been urged,
“ and reconcile yourself to your duty;
“ during which time, Mr. Leland
“ has so much delicacy, that he will
“ not visit you, except by your express
“ permission. I will therefore only
“ add this caution: consider well
“ what you are to determine; you
“ see the compliment paid your sense,
“ in

“ in consequence of your former
 “ prudent behaviour, which we are
 “ ready to acknowledge. It lies with
 “ you, therefore, not to abuse this
 “ confidence : Sir George says he is
 “ sure you will not ; and that at the
 “ time appointed we shall have rea-
 “ son to congratulate ourselves for
 “ relying on your good sense, and the
 “ knowledge you have of your duty
 “ and real happiness. If it be so, it
 “ will be occasion of joy to

“ Your affectionate kinsman,

“ J. GRETTON.”

You see, my dear, how I am at-
 tacked on all sides, particularly on
 that which, in youthful female minds,
 is generally the most accessible ; I
 mean

mean flattery. Yes, Arabella, my uncle and my guardian have descended to adulation with your Charlotte ; but why this artifice, why this high-strained policy ? Only to make their poor charge wretched. I am dutiful, I am flexible ; but I am firm where I think reason commands me to be so, and never (while I entertain the opinion I shall ever, I suppose, have reason to do) can I think of being joined to such a consort : yet strictly will I keep my promise ; and were I doating even to death, for love of the most worthy man on earth, his sighs, his vows, and the pleadings of my own heart in his favour, should all be disregarded till I had obtained the consent of those

170 The Force of Nature ; or,
who, next to Heaven, ought, by their
approbation, to sanctify my actions.

All this time they industriously
avoid saying any thing that may let
me into the light of what is become
of Mr. Gower, or his friend captain
Seymour ; but I imagine the former
is greatly embarrassed by his own evil
conduct : for oh ! my friend, I fear
he is not, cannot be the man we took
him for, or else he has such vile and
powerful enemies, as would blacken
even an angel. But human nature is
ever frail, and our slightest faults are
often so heightened by exaggeration,
as to shock the world in the recital.
At least, it should shew some traces
of remaining virtue, to endeavour at
con-

concealing his shame, securing his reputation, and delivering the world from the too coercive force of ill example. But whither am I going? Let me not seek to frame excuses for the guilty; but I would fain, methinks, console myself with the thought that there is yet one good man in the world. I think, I hope that is the only reason.

I could dwell longer on this subject, but that I am summoned hence to a room full of company; for they all seem studious for this little interval to entertain and oblige me.

Adieu.—If you have any regard for me, let me hear from you soon; and believe that your silence adds

inexpressibly to the uneasiness of
your

CHARLOTTE.

P. S. My dear friend, I beg your
pardon; just before I closed this,
my maid came out of breath to
me, with a packet which she
said her master (Sir John) had
taken in, and forgot to send me
before. They are your dear
letters.

I have heard besides, just now, that
the occasion of Mr. Gower's
absence is a duel he fought with
captain Selby on account of lady
Isabella, the latter of whom is
passionately fond of him, and
every-where says he has used
her basely. Sure, my dear, this
cannot

cannot be so.—I am kept almost a prisoner, and suffered to hear nothing but what my guardians please. This is strange usage ; and I begin to be suspicious. I pity your distressful circumstances, but can now add no more.

* * The contents of this packet were Miss Hale's answers to Charlotte's letters of the 20th of July, acquainting that lady, she was hard pressed, by her uncle and aunt, to marry her coxcomb lover, and was kept almost a prisoner on his own account. She farther adds, that she had received letters from her lover Selwyn, lamenting that he could not return for several months,

174 The Force of Nature ; or,

and in which he mentioned Mr.
Gower with the greatest respect
and compassion.



L E T T E R XXIV.

MISS EMILIA BLAND to ROBERT
LELAND, Esq;

S I R,

Aug. 8.

I AM now to acquaint you, that,
in spite of all your good-will to
me, and that of your emissaries, the
hand of providence has again re-
turned me to England's unhappy soil,
where first I drew my breath, where
first I met my ruin.

Oh! thou worse than any epithet
I can bestow on thee. Canst thou
read

read these lines and not tremble at the just judgment that awaits thee? Sighs, prayers, and tears, were formerly mine; but those I now lay aside; for on a heart like thine they can make no impresson. My fame, my fortune, and my virtue lost; my youth and beauty consigned over to be wasted in fruitless complainings: my father's undeserved misery, my grievous, abandoned, lost condition; all these are wrongs which must awake, even in a woman, the spirit of vengeance, and make her dare beyond her sex.—Such is now my case; and I no more petition you for favour; no more, as once you boasted, kneel at your feet, and intreat to be received to your embraces. No;—I

176 The Force of Nature; or,

abhor your person; I detest your manners: only this, reflect on the injuries you have done me, and then remember, that if there is justice to be had on earth, or obtained by prayers of high Heaven itself, it shall be sought for till it is found by the injured

// E. BLAND.

P. S. Think not to rest concealed from me: I have found you, and will pursue you even to the verge of the creation.—Ere long expect to see me haunting you like a ghost, and pursuing you through all your scenes of guilty pleasure.

— Written

[Written with a pencil on the back of
the foregoing.]

Leland, take care of thyself: I find
the ship that carried Emilia has
been forced back by contrary
winds: herself is now in England.
The inclosed I came at by a stra-
tagem: I know it is her hand, and
could not be deceived by a forgery.
Send to her immediately, and, if
possible, stop her confounded
mouth, or she'll undo us all.

Aug. 15.

Thine *****.

178 The Force of Nature; or,

L E T T E R XXIV.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to DAVID
PAYNE.

Aug. 17.

PLAGUE on it! my friend!
we are all to seek here again.—
The envious winds, it seems, have
sent us back again our load of mis-
chief; I mean Emilia Bland. She
has obliged me with a precious letter,
a copy of which I send inclosed.—
Now, David, you must once more
find her out, and amuse her till my
affair is finished with Miss Charlotte
Carleton, which is on the eve of
completion; otherwise I am ruined.
To ask favour of her will be equally
mean and vain; but the master-
piece

piece will be to appear to indulge her revenge, yet put her on a wrong scent, insomuch that she may in reality be helping our cause while she supposes she is injuring us ; and this, I think, may be done in a manner which the bearer* will communicate. He is just let into so much of the secret as may tend to do us service, without knowing any thing that can turn out to our detriment, as you will find the moment you question him.—I am in great haste, so bid you farewell, heartily recommending the affair to your consideration ; and not doubting but your prudent measures

* A paper which was sent by the messenger does not appear in this collection.

180 The Force of Nature; or,
will be crowned with the wonted
success, to the joy of your friend

LELAND.

P. S. The supplies you mentioned
last I have sent herewith.



L E T T E R XXVI.

MISS ARABELLA HALE to Miss
CHARLOTTE CARLETON.

Aug. 25,

WHAT a scene of treachery,
my dear friend, begins to
open on our view!—Never, sure,
were such a set of vile schemers as
we have had to deal with. Would
you think it, my Charlotte? would
you

you imagine that my coxcomb lover Halsford is no other than one Edmonds, an intimate acquaintance of your Leland, and one who (certainly) has no more intention of marrying me than his grandmother? but this has been all done to plague and perplex. What their scheme in it could be, I am yet at a loss to guess; but of this I am well assured, it must have been a vile one. This Edmonds is a married man already, and has two children. All this we found out by a letter of Leland's which he dropped out of his pocket, and which my waiting woman brought me. My uncle and aunt, on being shewn the epistle, were so loud in their resentments, that Edmonds's servant overheard

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heard them; and, getting the horses
out of the stable, went to search for
his master, who was then abroad;
and neither of them have we heard
of since. I have received another
letter from Mr. Selwyn; I heartily
wish he would hasten his return;
for you see, my dear, we are every
hour in danger from the machinations
of these wicked men.

For Heaven's sake, Charlotte, what
do you hear of Mr. Gower? They
talk of his going abroad. I am
firmly persuaded all his troubles are
undeserved, and have not the least
doubt but that he will come out pure
gold upon the essay. The discovery
I have mentioned would be alone
suffi-

sufficient to make me entertain that opinion of him. It were not amiss if you communicated this affair in confidence to your uncle and Sir George, during the interval of breathing-time allowed you; let them be never so obstinate, this must, at least, rouse their suspicions of Leland, and contribute to rid you of his loathed addresses. I am in haste; so, for the present, adieu! my charming friend: remember your

ARABELLA.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXVII.

Miss A. HALE, in continuation.

Aug. 28.

O H my dear Charlotte ! still more discoveries ! and among them one that nearly concerns your peace. This morning I was called down into the parlour, where a young woman, neatly dressed, waited for me. Through the veil of sorrow which shaded her countenance something very agreeable appeared.—She curtsied low, and thus addressed me. “ Pardon, madam, my impertinence, “ if I ask whether your name be “ not Hale, and if you are not the “ intimate friend of Miss Charlotte “ Carleton ?” My heart bounded at that,

that name. "Yes, madam, said I,
"Hale is my name; and it is my
"boast that I am the friend of that
"excellent young lady you men-
"tion." I then desired her to be
seated, and proceed with what she had
to say, which she observed would great-
ly concern *your* welfare. "But first,
"madam," continued she, "I must
"trouble you with my own unhappy
"story. My name is Bland; I am
"the daughter of one who was for-
"merly a mercer in London; but
"by misfortunes in trade became
"bankrupt: much about the time of
"his failing, Mr. Leland introduced
"himself to our house, and affected
"to pay his addresses to me; my fa-
"ther thought himself bound in ho-
"nour

“nour to acquaint him with his cir-
“cumstances, but Mr. Leland made
“light of the matter, said that should
“occasion no difference, and, as a
“proof of it, lent him five hundred
“pounds immediately, on his bond.
“This generous behaviour filled our
“hearts with gratitude; and he was,
“after that, scarce ever out of my
“company : till, at last, perceiving
“him very apt to take many liberties
“I thought indecent, and at the same
“time not hinting a syllable more
“about marriage, I could not for-
“bear representing the case to my
“father, who talked to him, tho’
“very tenderly, on the subject. At
“first he strove to evade and shift the
“question; but when more closely
“pressed

“ pressed declared, with a seeming
“ concern, that it was not in his
“ power to marry, at present, on ac-
“ count of some connexions he had;
“ but that he would enter into any
“ agreement whatsoever to marry no
“ other but myself; and said it de-
“ pended chiefly on time, and the
“ caprice of his relations, which as
“ soon as it should be removed, or
“ they translated to another world,
“ he would most willingly be united
“ to me: *in the interim I should want*
“ *for nothing.* This way of reason-
“ ing was by no means satisfactory
“ to my father; and the last sentence
“ carried an ambiguous meaning with
“ it, of which he was not sensible.
“ However, being under obligations,
“ he

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“ he was obliged to be content
“ with it; and so the matter rested
“ there.

“ Mr. Leland, nothing abashed at
“ some modest hints my father had
“ thrown out, thinking us both in
“ his power, presumed now to take
“ more liberties than ever; and on
“ my tenderly reproaching him with
“ it, (for, I blush to own it, he had
“ taken but too full a possession of
“ my breast) he had the impudence
“ to affront me with a proposal of
“ becoming his mistress. — Stung
“ with shame and anger, I broke
“ from him, and loaded him with a
“ thousand opprobrious terms: he
“ in vain endeavoured to palliate
“ the affair by saying he meant only
“ till

“till things could be brought about.
“I would not hear him, but ran instantly to inform my father of his treatment, who, in a transport of rage, sent a message to forbid him the house.”—“Thus much have I done, my dear daughter, said he, for your sake, and hazarded even my own ruin to preserve your honour. I see your heart is full; but reply not; it is, let the consequence be what it may, a sacrifice I shall never repent, while your virtue continues to deserve it.”—“He spoke this with the more earnestness, and loaded me the more with caresses, because he was no stranger to the self-denial I practised, and was witness to the pangs I suffered,
“while

“ while I endeavoured to tear the
“ seducer from my bosom. These
“ ended, at last, in an illness which
“ threatened even my life. For nine
“ days I lay in a deplorable condition,
“ during all which time we had
“ heard nothing of Leland ; but on
“ the tenth a messenger arrived with
“ a letter, in which he expressed the
“ highest sorrow for what had hap-
“ pened, and the tenderest regard for
“ me ; avowing, that all he had said
“ was only a trial, the consequence
“ of which might have been pre-
“ vented, had not his resentment on
“ being forbid the house hindered
“ his coming sooner to an expla-
“ nation. He concluded by saying,
“ that my sickness had disarmed his
“ anger,

“ anger, and made him truly pe-
“ nitent for the imprudence he had
“ been guilty of, and earnestly re-
“ quested to be admitted once more to
“ converse with my father. That ten-
“ der parent brought this letter to me
“ during one of the intervals of rest
“ my fever permitted me to enjoy.”—
“ You see here, said he, my daughter,
“ what Mr. Leland alledges in his
“ excuse. Perhaps it may be so ;
“ perhaps his high spirit would not
“ permit him to think true virtue
“ resided in a sphere beneath his
“ own ; and he therefore took this
“ method of proving it. Yet when
“ I reflect on his unfeigned passion,
“ and the hints he has thrown out to
“ me, I greatly fear ;—but all things
“ con-

“considered, it is highly proper I
 “should see him. This letter of his,
 “which I will carefully preserve,
 “may at any time be referred to as
 “the voucher of his honour : what
 “says my Emilia ?” — “Do even, my
 “dear Sir, as your own heart directs
 “you, said I, with a faint voice ; but
 “peace, I fear, will never return to
 “my breast again.” — After many
 “expressions of tenderness, my fa-
 “ther departed, and I saw him not
 “again till the next day ; when, as
 “he heard I was grown much better
 “in health, he entered my chamber,
 “leading my lover. — “Behold, said
 “the latter, the penitent ready to atone
 “for his crime.” — Trembling, he ap-
 “proached me, and, kneeling by my
 “bed-

“ bed-side, urged every excuse he
“ could think of; and, seizing one of
“ my hands, bedewed it with his
“ tears, solliciting, in the most sub-
“ missive terms, my forgiveness.—
“ Such unfeigned sorrow appeared in
“ his countenance, and my heart
“ pleaded so strongly for him, that,
“ after looking towards my father
“ for his approbation, I granted his
“ pardon, and he sealed it with a
“ kiss: then, rising from my bed-
“ side, and lifting his eyes to heaven,
“ he made use of this remarkable
“ expression — “ Hear me, heaven!
“ and when I wrong this goodness,
“ or address my vows to any other,
“ may thy severest curses be poured
“ upon my head; may I fail in all

“ I undertake, be cursed with po-
 “ verty and shame, and, at last, cut
 “ off by an untimely death, in the
 “ very flower of my youth, and
 “ height of all my sins.” — The
 “ imprecation yet rings horrible in
 “ my ears.

“ But to detain you as little as
 “ possible : from that period my dis-
 “ order abated, and, by the time I
 “ was perfectly recovered, he had so
 “ fully prevailed on my father’s cre-
 “ dulity and mine, that the latter
 “ trusted me, and I trusted myself on
 “ a visit with him and a female re-
 “ lation to the country seat of lord
 “ M****. It was there that, with
 “ much persuasion, (my father’s con-
 “ sent

“ sent being first wrote for, and ob-
“ tained) I was prevailed on, for the
“ sake of keeping the marriage pri-
“ vate, to be joined, as I thought, by
“ his lordship’s chaplain; but, after
“ about a fortnight’s enjoyment,
“ my husband abandoned me, and
“ set off for Paris, leaving me a let-
“ ter, in which he gave me to un-
“ derstand that I was not his wife;
“ that the person who married us
“ was no clergyman, and was set out
“ on his travels to seek his fortune,
“ which would put him to no man-
“ ner of inconvenience, as he had
“ intended a journey to the continent,
“ in search of better fortunes, pre-
“ vious to this undertaking: and
“ had the cruelty to add, I need not

“ be surpris'd at this conduct, as he
“ had bought me of my father. I was
“ astonish'd ! I was thunder-struck !
“ but exclamations were vain : and
“ his lordship gave me to understand,
“ that as he was a total stranger to
“ our marriage, having not been
“ present at it, he did not care how
“ little share he bore in the scandal of
“ the affair ; and the sooner I put an
“ end to my visit, the more he should
“ be oblig'd to me. Though I be-
“ lieved the nobleman no less a villain
“ than his friend, yet I was, in a great
“ measure, forced to comply with his
“ solicitations ; and quitted his villa,
“ covered with blushes of shame and
“ resentment, to return to my father.
“ Words cannot express the anguish
“ that

“ that attended our meeting, or the
“ tears he shed over his ruined child !
“ Meanwhile, his own circumstances
“ were but very indifferent ; and he
“ expected every day to stop payment.
“ I petitioned him, in the mean
“ while, to send me into the west of
“ England, where I remained till, re-
“ ceiving news of Leland’s return, I
“ sent repeatedly to him letters of re-
“ proach. For a long time he af-
“ fected not to notice them ; and I,
“ having an opportunity to go as
“ companion to a lady to Ireland,
“ obtained my father’s consent, and
“ accordingly went thither, where I
“ remained till my patroness died.
“ On my return, hearing that Leland
“ was about to address a young lady

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“ of family and fortune, I then sent to
“ him :—the consequence was, that
“ he threatened, in case I trou-
“ bled him any farther, he would
“ take care the bond (of which he
“ had made an assignment) should
“ come upon my father, which would
“ prove my absolute ruin. Nor was
“ this all. He contrived letters to be
“ sent me from Ireland, informing
“ me, that there was a codicil to my
“ late patroness’s will found, by which
“ I was intitled to a considerable sum,
“ and requiring my immediate pre-
“ sence. Fearing, on the one hand,
“ my parent’s ruin ; and lured, on the
“ other, with the hope of being en-
“ abled to support his sinking credit,
“ I set out again for Ireland. We
“ were

“ were driven back by contrary
“ winds ; and, during the little time
“ we waited to put to sea, I disco-
“ vered this to be all done by his ar-
“ tifice, and the contrivance of one
“ David Payne, a miserable retainer
“ of his. Meanwhile he caused my
“ father to be arrested by him, who
“ now lies in prison for the five hun-
“ dred pounds; and many other debts
“ being brought against him, I doubt
“ he will remain there for the rest
“ of his life. This complicated vil-
“ lainy so enraged me, that I resolved
“ instantly to find him out. I suc-
“ ceeded, and sent him a letter, in
“ the transport of my rage, telling
“ him what he has to expect from
“ me : I next made it my business to

“ find who the lady was, and per-
“ ceived myself more interested than
“ I at first imagined in the affair,
“ when I heard it was Miss Char-
“ lotte Carleton, a person who bears
“ so extraordinary a character, and
“ was so well known to many of
“ my relations; I hastned, therefore,
“ to find you, as I was informed of
“ your connexions with that lady,
“ and sincerely wish my information
“ may come time enough to save that
“ amiable young lady from absolute
“ and inevitable destruction, which,
“ surely, awaits her, in case of an
“ union with such a monster, who
“ regards no laws, either human or
“ divine; whom no faith, no vows,
“ can bind.

“ Thus

“ Thus have I gone through the
“ whole of my unhappy story, the
“ remembrance of which brings tears
“ into my eyes ; yet I shall esteem it
“ some kind of alleviation to my mis-
“ fortunes, if I can, by any means,
“ prevent those evils to others, which
“ I myself have proved, by a sad ex-
“ perience.”

She ceased ; and, wiping her eyes,
heaved a deep sigh from the bottom
of her breast. I was affected, and
could not help joining with her :
however, it is now time to put an end
to this letter, as she did to her visit ;
which I will do, by adjuring you, my
dear, to lose no time in making a
proper use of this information of your

ARABELLA HALE.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

JAS SELWYN, Esq; to Mr. GOWER.

July 23.

IT is with the greatest pleasure, my friend, that I receive your letters, and hear of your welfare. The difficulties you are involved in, serve but to shew your virtues to more advantage. You lament your having been led astray by that base woman, the cause of your misfortunes ; yet what have you not done to recompence her for that imaginary loss she is supposed to have sustained ? Believe me, you torture your generous heart too much. The affair of lady Isabella is, indeed, an unfortunate one ; yet, as you have acted there with all
the

the circumspection human prudence can dictate, follow, my friend, the secret impulse of your own delicate heart; and rest assured, while you do so, you will fall under the censure of no good man who is acquainted with your virtues.

I cannot help perceiving you are deeply touched with Miss Charlotte Carleton; nor do I wonder at it: she is an excellent creature, as my Arabella has informed me;—there is the strictest intimacy between these two of the most amiable females our country has ever produced.

From the observations I have been able to make, during my stay here, in a public station, the ladies of
France

France have very little share in my praises.—A want of delicacy and tenderness, and an affectation of learning, in this nation, run through the whole sex ; and, as for beauty, they cannot have the least pretence to dispute the palm, as well you know, with the *Belles Angloises*. On the whole, I could heartily wish my business was finished here, that I might return to my friend, and to my Arabella, whose relations, I find, entertain unfavourable opinions of your

SELWYN.

P. S. I have received your letters, and your Parisian friends desire to be remembered to you.

L E T.

LETTER XXIX.

From the same to the same.

July 28.

OUR misfortunes, my friend, go hand in hand; I find my Arabella is forbidden to correspond with me, and threatened with the addresses of a coxcomb; whilst I, unfortunate as I am, cannot come to England to her deliverance: yet I trust to her spirit and perseverance, and rely on her constancy and truth. But my Gower's case would be, indeed, more unhappy, if his fears prove true. What to him can secure the possession of his Charlotte, who dares not even solicit such a blessing?

Believe

Believe me, my friend, I most sincerely pity you, as, surely, you and that lady were formed for each other : but I need not tell *you* that we must bear with ill fortune, nor repeat those lectures on patience and prudence, which I have so often attended to, with pleasure, from your lips.

Captain Seymour I have always respected ; there was an ingenuous candour, a noble generosity of spirit, that ever marked his wildest moments. Even in the heat, the eagerness of youth, when the pulse beats most impetuously for pleasure, I have seen him suddenly start back from the pursuit of it, at the least glance of an object of compassion, while

while the big tear stood in his manly eye. His word too, once passed, was ever inviolate, and his friendship firm and sacred. Such a convert does honour to the religion we profess, and double honour to him who reclaimed from the vices and follies of this age so brave a soldier, so worthy a member of the community. If he loves Harriet, and she is worthy of him, may they be joined, and may heaven smile upon their union!

As to Ramble, I fear he has drank too deep of Circe's cup ever to be reformed. The bitter waters of repentance, at least, he must first pass; and, in the mean time, his fickle
temper

temper is by no means to be trusted; I perceive you think so, though you are ever *cautious* in your censures. Too great a latitude of conversation in public life has, perhaps, made me too *free* in mine.

Poor, hapless Isabella! indeed: how deeply must that melancholy epistle of hers have touched your generous heart! She does certainly deserve compassion, and possesses a form which in some might be sufficient to inspire (together with her accomplishments) an ardent passion.

But since it is otherwise with you, I commend your resolution of falling as little as possible in her way. Yet sure you will not seclude yourself, on her account, from the world, and be-
take

take yourself to solitude ; you, whom heaven formed for all the duties of society, and seemed to hold up as a pattern to half mankind.

Your tormentor, Mrs. Arden, is arrived in this city : what she intends here, is to me strange indeed. She is still a fine woman ; but the anger that so frequently is seen to lighten in her face, destroys, in a great measure, her power of pleasing.—That fierce passion in all is hateful, but most of all in women, whose soft texture was never intended, sure, by nature, to be the seat of such rude commotions : it is therefore a trespass against her dictates thus to indulge them. Nay, that very spirit which is so laudable in men, is ever in women disagreeable ;

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able; for this simple reason, that the conduct of the male and female part of the creation should be, in many respects, as different as their sexes.

But it is now time to conclude this epistle; and the more so, as I am, at this instant, about to write to Miss Hale, notwithstanding her uncle's prohibition, since on her depends the happiness or misery of

SELWYN.

L E T.

L E T T E R X X X .

From the same to the same.

July 31.

UNHAPPY, generous man!
to what misfortunes are you
reduced! the chief of which is, the
loss of that character you have so well
merited to preserve. What can Sir
John Gretton mean by thinking to
match his excellent niece with the
detested Leland? I assure you he is
not unknown here; and a French
gentleman, whose sister he basely se-
duced, is, at this instant, vowing
vengeance on him. Next spring his
business calls him to England, where
he is determined to find out the se-
ducer; nor is his danger little; for
this

this gentleman, Monsieur de Longueville, is one of the highest spirits, and esteemed the completest master of his weapons in all France : but what is this to your present situation ? What can you do more, my friend, for Isabella ? You have already risked, for her, your life, your fame, your love ; is there yet another sacrifice left to be made to gratitude, to honour, or even to compassion itself ?

Sure, if captain Selby is a man of honour, he will acquit you of all blame in this affair, which is purely of his own seeking. You are, indeed, too severe in your censures upon yourself. What man is there, of your known courage and spirit, who
could

could have acted more tenderly? But you acquaint me not with what farther you intend.—Were you not the man I know you for, I should indeed dread some rash, some desperate action; as it is, I fear you should follow the resolution you hinted at, and deprive the world of your virtues.

—* * *

August 3.

I HAVE this moment heard that your sworn enemy, Mrs. Arden, holds secret correspondence with Leland; I find also, that lord M****, young Edmonds, and a despicable fellow called David Payne, are of the party; as far as I can guess, there are deep designs going forward.—

What they are, I cannot learn ; but as soon as I can, I will let you know. Mean while, make not yourself uneasy at any thing that may concern that nefarious woman. With regard to herself, nothing bad that can befall her is worse than she deserves ; and as for her wicked schemes upon others, they will be closely watched.

Here is a worthy clergyman arrived in Paris, who speaks of you with raptures ; I imagine you will not be surprised that he does so, when I add, he was the preceptor of Isabella. He has, indeed, much of the primitive christian about him. Void of bigotry and superstition, void of spiritual pride, and the affectation of singularity, he is, at the
same

same time, the divine, the gentleman, and the man. The young lady could not fail to be formed to amiable accomplishments, who had such a director.

He laments her unhappy situation with a pathetic and fatherly tenderness, and admires, at the same time, your constancy and compassionate temper. The good man says his business in France is of the utmost importance to his dear Child's happiness, as he calls her, and seems to be earnest with Heaven to bless his embassy with success.

In short, all things are now upon a crisis, and it is difficult to form a guess how our destiny will determine them.

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them. It behoves us, however, as
you have justly observed, to wait the
event with fortitude and resignation,
after having made a proper use of the
reason we are endued with, to ward
off, by every means which virtue
warrants, those ills we are threatened
with.

My Arabella is still persecuted, I
find, by her coxcomb; but, I trust,
her perseverance will tire him out,
and oblige him to relinquish a prize
he never was born to deserve.

Adieu, my dear Gower. That
heaven may preserve and direct your
steps to happiness, so often and so
vainly sought below, is the wish of
your ever faithful

SELWYN.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXI.

Mrs. ARDEN to R. LELAND, Esq;

September 3.

AN D are your measures, Mr. Leland, after all, disconcerted, by a puling, whining girl? Is Gower triumphant? is Charlotte lost? and are you exposed and disappointed by so simple a method? And do you intend to sit down contented, and bear it all with *true Christian patience*? (I think that is the cant) Oh! rouse yourself, for shame, and learn spirit from a woman. Turn the tables on your enemies, and if captain Selby's sword could not do Gower's business, find, at least, some other expedient to answer that end: and as to your own

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scheme

scheme on Charlotte, there are yet hopes, as you will find by the inclosed paper*. What a plague is become of Ramble? Has he found another Eliza?

Do not fail to let me hear from you by every opportunity, while I keep my station here for our mutual service. That wretch, David Payne has proved a meer bungler in this his last undertaking: I find he disguised himself, and attempted to pass for another person, but was discovered by an artifice of the shallow Emily. What are you all, in affairs of this nature, compared with us women? Yield, you lords of the creation,

* A letter of his, not inserted here.

yield

yield the superiority, in plots of all kinds, to those you term the *weaker vessels*; and, amongst them, be not forgotten

MARGARET ARDEN.



L E T T E R XXXII.

Mr. EDMONDS to the E. of M****.

September 9.

I AM sorry, my lord, to inform you of our ill success; but we are all blown, detected, by Emily. The dæmon of disappointment, sure, shed his baleful influence over the head of Mr. Leland, when he first became acquainted with that foolish girl who takes, as it seems, a plea-

L 2

sure

sure in publishing her own shame, which most of the sex are careful to conceal.

I have been obliged to make a precipitate retreat from the fort I was preparing to take possession of ; and, fearing a vigorous sally from the besieged, I doubt, in my haste, I have left some of my baggage behind me.

In short, I was forced to make off so quickly from Mr. Hale's, that I am afraid some of my papers, which, in my hurry, I forgot, have fallen into his hands : however, if they have, I will take such measures as shall render them unserviceable to our enemies, and preclude all fear of injury to ourselves from any thing they may contain.

David

David Payne's letter it was that apprized me of his detection, and my danger : he has made a bungling piece of work of it ; but that dear devil of mischief, Margaret Arden, promises to set all right again, yet. Yesterday I heard of Ramble : he is at his old tricks again ; the forsaken Eliza has given way to a new face, and he is engaged in a fresh amour with an officer's wife who is gone abroad : so he has got employment, for some time, and cannot find leisure to assist us.

I am confoundedly vexed at being so suddenly forced to quit my pursuit of Arabella ; for, to tell you a secret, though you intended it only for a di-

version, I found the girl so handsome, so lively, and engaging, that I could have been glad of nearer connexions with her, which, one way or other, I should certainly have brought about, if I could have had time. Yet that cursed coxcomical air I assumed, it must be owned, spoke greatly against me ; but consent, you know, we do not always stand upon ; a word to the wife is sufficient. But can you get no tidings of Gower ? Has he hanged himself, in a fit of despair, and saved us the trouble of dispatching him ? No—surely his religion, that he talks so much of, will prevent him from acting the Roman part ; such is the excuse of our moderns for their cowardice.

For

For Heaven's sake, my lord, find me some employment, *pour passer le temps*, as our lively neighbours the French say, for I begin to be sick already of having no mischief to do; and, besides, I cannot put that cursed old fellow, Hale, out of my head, whenever I am idle; for he used to swear such bloody revenge against Selwyn, who, we persuaded him, was endeavouring to seduce his niece, that, by G—d, I fancy I hear him still.

And do, dear my lord, for the future, join me with some stout second in our next scheme, that I may have a *back*, in cases of emergency: for I assure you, the danger of the late

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adventure was not small, and the old
don took horse, and pursued me, with
a servant, for several miles. If he
had overtaken me, I suppose I should
have been no man for this world.—

At present, I am journeying towards
David Payne's, where, in a day or
two, your lordship may hear of

Your devoted servant,

EDMONDS.



L E T T E R XXXIII.

MISS CHARLOTTE CARLETON
to MISS ARABELLA HALE.

September 14.

H E A V E N, my dear Arabella,
Heaven has interposed in our
behalf: my troubles are now no
more,

more, and you have been, in a great measure, an instrument, in the hands of Providence, to free me from them.

It is now three days since your letter arrived; and at the same time came one to Sir John from the unhappy Emilia, couched in such terms as spoke the anguish of her heart too warmly, too sincerely, to admit a doubt of her veracity. Sir John and I both opened our letters at an instant; and Leland, who was in company, and sat next to my uncle, no sooner cast his eye on the superscription, than he appeared greatly agitated; and the letter being opened, just giving a glance at the signature, he rose suddenly, said he was taken

very ill, and quitted us so abruptly, that Sir John could not help noticing the manner of his departure: however, as he is very methodical, he stayed to finish reading Emely's paper, which he did aloud, and very distinctly, before he made any farther enquiry; but then rising and throwing down his spectacles with great fury on the table:—"Why here's a villain for you! Charlotte," said he; "but don't grieve, my good girl; we shall find one more deserving of you, and make you happy still in a nuptial state."—"Alas! my dear Sir," replied I, "save me from Leland, the detested Leland! and my whole life will be too little to sacrifice in duty to
"you:

“you : I think not of marriage.”—

“No, to be sure,” said he, archly, (looking in my face, while I blushed excessively) “but odso—we forget to

“call the villain to account. Who

“waits?—John, run, and tell Mr.

“Leland, I want to speak with him ;

“I suppose he is no farther off than

“the garden, taking a mouthful of

“air.—He might well be sick, in-

“deed.” Away went John ; but, as

I expected, returned without any ti-

dings of Leland. My uncle stamped,

swore, and worked himself into a

violent passion, bestowing on himself

the epithets of fool and blockhead

several times, in a very emphatical

manner : then taking me earnestly by

the hand, “Charlotte, child,” said

he ;

he ; “ forgive my follies — I have
 “ been deceived.” — “ Oh say no
 “ more, Sir,” said I ; “ you have
 “ more than atoned for all by own-
 “ ing the mistake ; believe me, your
 “ poor girl would sooner die than dis-
 “ obey you.” — “ Enough, enough,”
 said he ; “ thou art an excellent girl.
 “ Here, John, run, and find Sir
 “ George out ; I believe he is at
 “ Mr. Saunders’s, and let him wit-
 “ ness this extraordinary affair.” Sir
 George was, accordingly, fetched ;
 and, after some slight reproaches
 made to my uncle, all things were
 settled, and subsided to their wonted
 calmness.

Mean while Leland has left his
 town-house, and retired into the
 country,

country, full, I suppose, of shame and vexation: but Mr. Gower is not to be heard of, and lady Isabella, too, is retired, being somewhat recovered of her illness, no one knows whither. When I reflect, my dear, on these events, I cannot but admire the wonderful hand of heaven thus secretly working its own wise ends. But poor Emilia! she is, indeed, an object of pity; and I have tried all in my power to gain something more than pity from my guardians in her behalf. Her poor father, now imprisoned, seems to demand relief. What a villain is this Leland! Oh! Arabella, what woman; that hears this tale, will ever trust more to that dangerous experiment of marrying a

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reformed rake? Mr. Ramble I look
upon to be another of the same
stamp. How despicable do these
lords of the creation make them-
selves, by their base endeavours to
delude our confessedly weaker sex!

I am now happy in the favour of
my uncle and guardian ; pray Hea-
ven no cross accident may again de-
prive me of it ! Could I see you, my
Arabella, I think my felicity would
be nearly complete. Delivered, as
you are, from a troublesome lover,
may we hope to be favoured with
your company ? My uncle, to whom
I shewed your letter, longs to see
you ; and Sir George will be glad of
your company. My dear Arabella,
but

but that I know you have a soul (in spite of your lively disposition) soft to an excess, and capable of feeling all the tenderest pleasures and pains of friendship, I should tell you, that you could not conceive how eagerly I pant to see you. Sure, when nature formed our tempers, she framed them, though different, to suit so exactly, that nothing but the most perfect harmony can ever subsist between them. Tell me, my dear, do you imagine there is, among the men, a friendship so pure, so constant? Mr. Gower, and your Selwyn, I have often heard, are men whose souls have been long acquainted; yet, sure, they do not, cannot join like ours. The less flexile nature of the rougher
sex

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sex cannot, certainly, produce an union so kind, so endearing!

Make haste, my Arabel, to answer this my scrawl; and give me your opinion of this matter.—I am impatient till I hear, likewise, whether you will bless with your presence

Your faithful

CHARLOTTE.



LETTER XXXIV.

MISS ARABELLA HALE to MISS
CHARLOTTE CARLETON.

September 18.

I HAVE received, my dear Charlotte, your much-esteemed favours, and wish to Heaven we were
nearer

nearer neighbours : but this, at present, cannot be ; since my uncle will not, by any means, part with his Arabel, whom, he says, he is more fond of than ever, since the detection of the schemes of Edmonds.

I should have laughed excessively, could I, from some sly corner, have witnessed to your uncle's choler at the departure of that fiend Leland, whose confusion, I think, could never have escaped a discerning eye.

We have found, amongst that devil Edmonds's papers, which he left behind him in his hurry, some extraordinary letters, which my uncle and aunt are conning over at their leisure ; but have not thought proper, in their
great

234 The Force of Nature ; or,
great wisdom, to acquaint me, as
yet, with their contents : when they
do, I shall immediately communicate
them to my Charlotte.

You are a dear, unaccountable girl,
with your female friendship, and ro-
mantic notions ; believe me, child,
they are the antiquated growth of
the last century. I do not know,
though, whether the men, having
more strength and solidity of judge-
ment, may not properly be said to
exceed our sex in the purity and con-
stancy of their friendship. If weak-
ness be our characteristic, surely that,
at least, will prove but a poor ingre-
dient in the composition : yet seri-
ously, my dear, I believe neither *your*
Gower,

Gower, (that's in return for *my* Selwyn), nor any other man in the world, can form a friendship more pure, more tender, more constant, or sincere, than that your Arabella has formed with her Charlotte. It is strange to me what can become of Mr. Gower! and the intelligence you give me of lady Isabella heightens my surprize: sure they are not retired together! if they be, that circumstance alone will be enough to confirm the report that prevailed of his connexions with that unfortunate beauty. I must yet consider who were the propagators of the report; wretches whose delight is in deceit and lies, and who blacken virtue wherever they find it! Surely the
friend

friend of *my* Selwyn (since you will have him *mine*) must be incapable of such a baseness! at least let us believe so, till it is proved upon him.



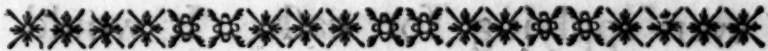
September 20.

O H! my dear friend, be cautious; take care of yourself. By what I can gather from Edmonds's papers, there is some vile design yet hatching against your peace: trust not too much to the goodness of your own excellent heart; but take counsel with that prudence you possess in so high a degree, and remember, there are wretches who are capable of any thing bad.—I tremble to think you, or any belonging to you, should be

con-

connected with these men, who are enemies to all the world but themselves. Adieu, my friend, be wary, and trust not too much to your good opinion of mankind; this is the advice of your

ARABELLA.



LETTER XXXVI.

ROBERT LELAND, Esq; to

Mrs. MARGARET ARDEN.

September 21.

WELL do you reprove us, my dear Mrs. Arden, for want of spirit and address in our undertakings; but we are once more enlivened, and have again taken heart to pursue our schemes. It was that
d—mn'd

d—mn'd bungling piece of work that Payne made, which undid us: but, for the future, we shall lay our designs cloſer together, and, *entre nous*, as ſoon as ever we can do without him, he ſhall be diſmiſſed the ſervice; for he grows lazy, and is ever applying for caſh. It would ſurpriſe you to ſee the account of the monies he has drawn for within theſe fix months! Edmonds, too, is but a coward, at the beſt: however, as he has a quick turn, and is good at imitations, he muſt be retained: beſides, he is a favourite with his lordſhip.—But with regard to your plan, I have ſent it back, with ſuch alterations as the laſt-mentioned noble perſonage and myſelf have judged neceſſary.

necessary. It will remain, then, only to wait your answer, and take the first opportunity of putting it in execution.

Edmonds tells us, he has taken proper precautions with regard to the papers his fear occasioned him to leave behind him; I wish to Heaven he may.—Isabella, I find, is gone off, and Gower, likewise, is retired: there must no cost or pains be spared to find where both of them are. Should they be together, it will best answer our purpose.

Adieu! Prepare the whole plan, for our second inspection, with all possible expedition; and if you hear any thing of Ramble, let us know, as you are sensible he is one of us;

240 The Force of Nature ; or,
and while he continues staunch to the
cause, neither he, nor Mrs. Arden,
will be forgotten by

ROBERT LELAND.



L E T T E R XXXVII.

Lady ISABELLA VERE to Doctor
BERTIE.

September 25.

STILL, my dear tutor, still
must I complain of my hard
fate, still own my woman's weak-
ness, and regret that unhappy pre-
possession of mind, which no length
of time can cure, no succession of
images efface. The subtile poison has
spread itself through all my veins,
and

and though I have recovered the outward appearance of health, I am consumed with secret fires which must one day end me. Why, gracious Heaven! why was I cast in so weak a mould? So tender, so susceptible of the softer passions, why did I gaze on Gower till I was undone?

For him, alas! unhappy as he is, oppressed with his own miseries, and bending under the added weight of mine, (for oh! his generous heart too severely feels them) he is gone I know not whither: his retreat is equally a secret (I find) to the world with my own. May that all-bounteous Being whom he has ever served, assist, protect him, and guide his wan-

242 The Force of Nature ; or,

dering steps, to whatever place he bends them : may he live long, and live to taste that happiness I never more must hope to enjoy ;—and may no anxious thought of me ever suggest itself to embitter his repose !

My dear Dr. Bertie, need I conjure you to leave untried no means of coming at the secret of my birth ? Perhaps my Gower has heard some hints of its uncertainty thrown out : perhaps that has been the real occasion of his coolness. As we have all our foibles, who knows but a violent attachment to family may be his.

This title which I wear, I own, ill suits a dubious birth, like mine ; and the good earl, who with his
dying

dying breath declared me not his daughter, (though I loved him with a filial affection) methinks had better never have bestowed it on me.—I hear, without any joy, of the additional fortune you have mentioned; since those I love most cannot share it with me.

Till you have unravelled this mystery, I remain here in a sweet recess, whose rural beauties are almost sufficient to sooth every care to rest. Beautiful nature adorns the landscape with a lovely simplicity that charms beyond the power of art. The declining season still wears a delightful face, and the serene sky smiles even more agreeably than in

M 2

the

244 The Force of Nature ; or,
the uncertain changes of the infant
spring ; fit emblem of that calm joy
which should possess the hearts of
the wise and virtuous, when the sub-
siding transports of rapturous exult-
ation mellow into a tranquil felicity :
Here Peace ! I court thee, long a
stranger to this breast ! here, Happi-
ness, I seek thee, where, in my ear-
lier days*, we have often walked
hand in hand together.

But whither am I wandering !
will you excuse these prolusions of
an unsettled fancy, and a mind agi-
tated with passion ? My guide, my
guardian, and my friend, adieu ! To

* The lady Isabella had before spent some
months in this retirement.

that

that Heaven whose faithful minister
you have ever approved yourself, to
his paternal care and protection are
you recommended by

Your affectionate

ISABELLA.



L E T T E R XXXVIII.

TO Miss CHARLOTTE CARLETON,

From a Hand unknown.

September 24.

Dear, excellent lady,

THOUGH I have not the ho-
nour of your acquaintance,
yet I am an humble admirer of your
virtues, and should be sorry to see
such qualifications serve to render you

246 The Force of Nature ; or,
unhappy. Were all men of my opinion, all would adore you, yet none aspire to the possession of your person.

I must own there never appeared but one in whom I could perceive the least shadow of deserving you, and he, I fear, will prove, at last, unworthy of you. If so, Heaven forbid you should entertain a passion for him ! there is but too great reason to think he is guilty of crimes so shocking as I will not wound your ears with repeating ; and this is the occasion of his present secession from his friends.—Lady Isabella, too, is fled ; remark but that, madam, and from thence draw your inference of
a *part*,

a *part*, where I fear to communicate the *whole*.

But the chief intent of this letter is to inform you, that you are far from being safe from the designs of Leland, who swears a bitter revenge for his former disappointment. In what manner he will execute it, is, as yet, utterly unknown to me; but it behoves you to use the utmost caution how you go out unattended, or speak with any stranger alone. It behoves also your uncle and Sir George to take care of themselves; for those whom you have to deal with, are desperate spirits, men whose whole lives are devoted to the service of vice, and make sport of

248 The Force of Nature; or,
such wickedness as would shock some
but to hear mentioned.

Farewel, dear lady; make a good
use of this caution, from

Your friend unknown.



L E T T E R X X X I X .

Sir JOHN GRETTON to Miss
ARABELLA HALE.

September 28.

OH! miss Hale, we are all dis-
tracted. Our Charlotte is lost!
and we have the greatest reason to
fear she is fallen into villanous
hands. Yesterday, in the evening,
Sir George and I went out to pay
a visit

a visit to Mr. Saunders, who is now become our neighbour in town; and about an hour afterwards came two men, dressed in his livery, with a chair, saying Sir George and himself desired to see our ward immediately: at the same time another stranger delivered a letter into Charlotte's hand, who stepped, unsuspecting, into the chair, (being ready dressed for company) and was carried off; since which time we have not been able to hear the least tidings of her. When we returned, we were surprized, beyond measure, to hear the tale of the servants, whom we blamed highly for not attending their mistress. As I doubted not but there was some wicked scheme at the bot-

250 The Force of Nature; or,
tom of this, I immediately dispatched
messengers to all quarters of the
town, but in vain: all the satisfaction
we have been able to obtain
is, that, instead of stopping at Mr.
Saunders's, the chair turned short towards
the next street which leads
towards Oxford Road, which they
might easily do, unobserved by her,
as the night was dark, and the curtains
close drawn.

What villany is this! That base
Leland, and his cursed crew, are,
undoubtedly, concerned in it. Two
nights ago he was seen at the play
with lord M****: how much do I
now repent that I ever gave ear to
such a wretch! Oh my niece! my
Char-

Charlotte ! how severely are we punished !



October 1.

LELAND is in town, and at his house, whither I sent a message not the most ceremonious in the world. He returned me an answer with great affected surprize and concern at the accident ; but observed, it was very strange no mischief could happen in a family, but he must be deemed the author or abettor of it. It is extraordinary ; but still he stands his ground, and says, if Charlotte is lost, Gower must, undoubtedly, be the man who has caused her to be conveyed away. This, indeed, we do not mind ; yet is Gower one of whom

whom I can, by no means, conceive a good opinion, till his character stands in a more fair and open point of view.—His strange affair with lady Isabella, his duel with the officer, his departure, and his obscure connexions, all speak strongly against him.

On the whole, I must confess, madam, I have a thousand distracting doubts at this time. My niece having now no nearer relation alive, she is to me as a daughter; and it will burst my heart with sorrow to hear of any evil that may betide her. I know not, as I said before, what to think of this affair. Leland is a most complete villain; if she

she is fallen into the hands of his emissaries, no one knows to what length his revenge may carry him: yet he dares not, sure, dishonour her! But he shall be closely watched; and if I find he is concerned in this, I will prepare for him a most terrible revenge.—If Gower has her, it is, I almost fear, with her own consent: but I will not be too hasty to accuse one, to whose prudence there have hitherto appeared no exceptions, and on whose sincerity and truth the firmest reliance might well have been placed. No—she is surely innocent; and I, alone, am to blame, fool that I was, to permit the addresses of that vile Leland!

For

For Heaven's sake, madam, let me hear from you soon; and believe me to be

Yours, sincerely,

J. GRETTON.



L E T T E R XL.

Miss ARABELLA HALE to Sir JOHN GRETTON.

October 4.

YOU have distracted me, Sir John, with your melancholy account of what has happened to my dear Charlotte. Gone! say you, and in so artful a manner! and can you suspect any but Leland, and his cursed crew? Is not your niece vir-
tue

tue and sincerity itself? and could she thus deceive you? Oh! no: the case is but too plain—Some vile emissary of that disturber of the peace of families has, no doubt, even now got my friend within his power, and waits but his master's arrival to complete the horrid scene: Alas! I shudder but to think of the consequences!

For Heaven's sake, Sir John, lose no time, therefore, in making diligent search, amongst all the persons and places Leland is acquainted with, and entertain not the least surmise of her going off by her own consent, with Mr. Gower, whose place
of

of residence none of us are, or can be, at present, acquainted with. If he be ever so bad, the worst of his guilt lies with the lady Isabella; for as to your niece, it is most certain he never made any the most distant professions of a passion for her.

If any one is acquainted with the heart of that excellent young lady, depend on it, Sir John, I must be the person; since I have known her from her childhood, and we have never been accustomed to disguise our thoughts from one another. As for hers, indeed they have ever been so pure and spotless, that Earth and Heaven might well be witnesses of them.

May

The History of Lord Sommers. 7

May Heaven preserve her peace
and honour, and restore her to your
arms, and to the ardent wishes of
her

ARABELLA HALE.

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